

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



August 2013

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Unity in Diversity*

IN this world we find that all happiness is followed by misery as its shadow. Life has its shadow, death. They must go together, because they are not contradictory, not two separate existences, but different manifestations of the same unit, life and death, sorrow and happiness, good and evil. The dualistic conception that good and evil are two separate entities, and that they are both going on eternally, is absurd on the face of it. They are the diverse manifestations of one and the same fact, one time appearing as bad, and at another time as good. The difference does not exist in kind, but only in degree.

A few words ought to be said here. You will generally hear that this Vedanta, this philosophy and other Eastern systems, look only to something beyond, letting go the enjoyments and struggle of this life. This idea is entirely wrong. It is only ignorant people who do not know anything of Eastern thought, and never had brain enough to understand anything of its real teaching, that tell you so. On the contrary, we read in our scriptures that our philosophers do not want to go to other worlds, but depreciate them as places where people weep and laugh for a little while only, and then die. As long as we are weak we shall have to go through these experiences; but whatever is true, is here, and that is the human soul.



Let us all work out our own plans. Would to God all of us were equally practical on both sides. A time must come when every man will be as intensely practical in the scientific world as in the spiritual, and then that Oneness, the harmony of Oneness, will pervade the whole world. The whole of mankind will become Jivanmuktas—free whilst living. We are all struggling towards that one end through our jealousies and hatreds, through our love and co-operation. A tremendous stream is flowing towards the ocean carrying us all along with it; and though like straws and scraps of paper we may at times float aimlessly about, in the long run we are sure to join the Ocean of Life and Bliss.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 2.175–88.



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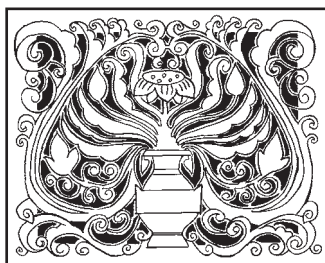


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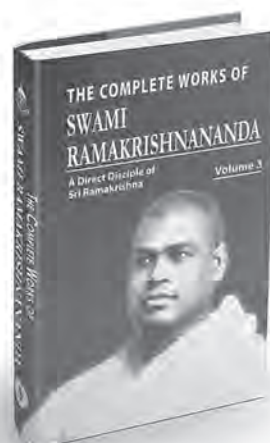
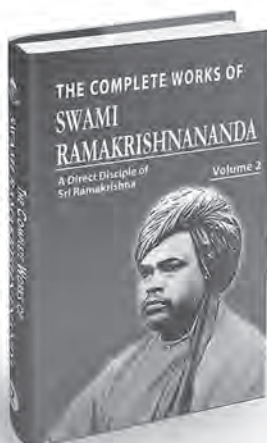
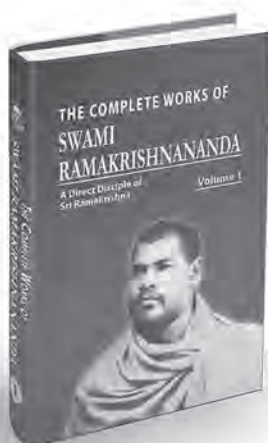
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Personal and Universal Space

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यद्वै तद्ब्रह्मेतीदं वाव तद्योऽयं बहिर्धा पुरुषादाकाशो
यो वै स बहिर्धा पुरुषादाकाशः ॥
अयं वाव स योऽयमन्तः पुरुष आकाशो यो वै सोऽन्तः पुरुष आकाशः ॥
अयं वाव स योऽयमन्तर्हृदय आकाशस्तदेतत्पूर्णमप्रवर्ति
पूर्णमप्रवर्तिनीं श्रियं लभते य एवं वेद ॥

That which is verily Brahman is indeed this which is the space outside a person. That space which is outside a person is indeed this which is the space within a person. That which is the space within a person is indeed the space that is within the heart. That which is this (space within the heart) is all-pervading and without movement. He who knows thus attains a glory that is full and indestructible.

(*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.12.7–9)

परं गुह्यमिदं स्थानमव्यक्तं ब्रह्म निराश्रयम् ।
व्योमरूपं कलासूक्ष्मं विष्णोस्तत्परमं पदम् ॥

This is Supreme, hidden in mystery, the resting place (of all) and imperceptible; it is Brahman, without support, of the nature of unlimited space, atomic, and subtle. This is the supreme abode of Vishnu.

(*Tejabindu Upanishad*, 5)

घटसंवृतमाकाशं नीयमाने घटे यथा ।
घटो नीयेत नाऽऽकाशं तथा जीवो नभोपमः ॥

Just as a jar, which being removed (from one place to another), changes places and not the space enclosed in it—so is the jiva, which resembles the space.

(*Amritabindu Upanishad*, 13)

THIS MONTH

Through science and marvellous technology humankind has been trying to conquer nature and in the process knowing more about itself. Behind this great mission and urge is the **Search for Immortality**.



Life of Pi, both the novel and the movie, has many aspects that make one ponder deeply. Pritha Lal, a professional in the field of Organizational Development in the US, writes on ***Life of Pi: A Lesson on Leadership of the Self***.

Swami Vivekananda has been viewed from different angles by different people. Sudesh Garg, a devotee from Ambala, attempts a glimpse of **Vivekananda: The Omniscient**.

Can inevitable death be optional to humans in the future? Recent scientific developments has roused interest in android bodies. While speaking of these developments and looking at Tibetan Buddhistic practices, Niraj Kumar, president of the Society for Asian Integration, New Delhi, writes of **Hologram Avatars and Rainbow Bodies**.



There is a growing interest in modern scientific theories among many scholars of Vedanta. Rajeshwar Mukhopadhyaya, research scholar and doctoral student from Birbhum, West Bengal, writes on **Vedanta Meets Science**.

In **Salient Features of Vivekananda's Literature**, Panchugopal Bakshi, an educationist who researched Tagore's literature in Calcutta University, details Swamiji's skills in expressing both subjective and objective ideas in a lucid and live language.



The concluding part of **Philosophy as Sadhana** deals with Ludwig Wittgenstein and how he viewed philosophy. Dr Ravindra K S Choudhary is a senior lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, Vinoba Bhawe University, Hazaribag.



Rhyddhi Chakraborty, a doctoral student at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, concludes her **Women and Rites of Marriage** by highlighting Swami Vivekananda's views on women.

In the eleventh part of **Eternal Words**, Swami Adbhutananda gives practical advice to follow an ideal life, exemplified with incidents in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji. The swami's words are translated from *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata.

Search for Immortality

IT IS WIDELY KNOWN that diet plays an important role in the making or marring of personalities. We are what, how, and where we eat and drink. Science is also increasingly correlating lifestyle diseases with many diets. Its next step will be about understanding how food affects even the quality of the mind. These findings are establishing the veracity of ancient Indian dietary practices. But like every good idea, when pushed to its extreme, becomes bad; the importance and regulation of food, type, and quantity became almost a dharma for Indians. This is the reason why Swami Vivekananda lambasted the wrong application of these principles and showed that diets and so on are only means to dharma. True dharma, he taught, is the realization of the Atman or God.

Humankind, as a very curious species, searches, discovers, and experiments with anything. This curiosity, driven by a thirst for knowledge, is always coupled with the desire to dominate and conquer nature. And speaking about food, most of what humans eat—fruits, vegetables, plants, and domesticated animals—have all been modified by ingeniously selecting and crossing the various strains over and over again for obtaining bigger, better, and more disease-resistant food in large quantities. With the advent of biotechnology and genetic engineering this pace has picked up to meet the needs of the growing human population. This tinkering with nature does not stop at food; for instance, what an amazing variety of dogs we find in the world. This is human handiwork over the centuries.

We have been making the food we eat, which

in turn makes us. Humans have, over 10,000 years, changed the land, seas and rivers, atmosphere, and climate. Today newer and powerful technologies are impacting the world and leaving our footprints on every micro-environment. Most of these massive changes are dangerous and irreversible. As humans have changed the environment, so has the environment changed humans.

Being products of nature, human curiosity, knowledge, and power have increased to the degree of not just participating with nature but competing with her. Humans want to lead nature. All this progress is helping resurface, with a new paradigm, the old ideas of immortality. In the old days religious and ethical systems helped people face death by promising eternal life elsewhere. Growing knowledge and power is dismissing such delusions, but since ideas of immortality do not die, humankind is waking up to the possibility of being able to live forever in other more feasible and durable technological forms. This is the new dream: the commingling of diverse technologies—computers, nano, genetic, synthetic DNA, quantum mechanics, sophisticated imaging, and so on—to create a new immortality. One is reminded of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, which recounts King Gilgamesh's exploits in an ultimately unsuccessful quest for immortality.

Humans, however, tend to forget that life, with the present state of knowledge and consciousness, is not the end product of evolution. The present state of life and mind will become redundant and outdated in a few years. And to hope to keep this present level of life and mind


forever in some durable form is ridiculous as these forms will be dim-witted. Of course long years of trying to play God will not deter some people, and they are willing to wait for superb technology to dovetail with the aspiration for immortality. But even in the far future human personalities will undergo constant changes; so to keep such personalities forever would mean stopping the evolution of humankind. At this crucial time in human history, ideas of the leadership of the self have to come in in order for us to take charge of ourselves in positive ways.

Yet the idea of immortality is so deeply ingrained that it is impossible for us to let it go. Where does it come from? Swamiji says: 'Life is such a wonderful reality that you cannot for a moment forget it. You may as well doubt that you exist. This is the first fact of consciousness—I am. Who can imagine a state of things which never existed? It is the most self-evident of all truths. So, the idea of immortality is inherent in man. How can one discuss a subject that is unimaginable? Why should we want to discuss the pros and cons of a subject that is self-evident?' But leaving the direct route to experience immortality, humans have come up with, in quantum physics, a theory called 'many-worlds interpretation' proposing many universes in which we—as entities, not as physical bodies—simultaneously exist; therefore, death is unreal.

It is not that nature passively lets humans manipulate her without a fight, and this is what we are bitterly learning. But human egocentricity blinds us into feeling great about our achievements so far and keeps imagining even more rapid future achievements. Actually, what humans have achieved or will achieve is within a bigger plan of nature. Nature is using us to further her work! She is in charge and lets us help her, when she wants it. And when she does not want anything, we shall become helpless.

This idea is necessary today to bring in a much-needed humility in our knowledge and power. Our understanding of nature, her laws, and her vastness and complexity is still merely a drop in the ocean of existence. In the internal world too our understanding of life, mind, feelings, cognitions, willing, desires, and so on is also a mere drop in the vast ocean of internal existence. With all our knowledge, aided by sophisticated machines, we are yet miserable, implying that our knowledge is inadequate. Even if we increase it exponentially every day, we will not become happy or immortal, for true knowledge brings in bliss and immortality. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says: 'When humans will (be able to) roll up space like leather, then there will be an end of sorrow without knowing the Effulgent One.' Space and time are at times likened to a fabric, which we know very little about; though humans may not be able to roll it like leather, yet some speak about time-space warps and worm-holes in space-time. But the easier way is to know the Effulgent One, known as the Atman or God.

This Reality is the rationale of all human curiosity, knowledge, power, and the search for immortality. But leaving this aside, humans run after a chimera of immortality while the real immortality beckons us. We make the terrible mistake of attempting to produce immortal bodies and minds, which can never be, for all these things are finite and perishable. The *Katha Upanishad* says: 'The unintelligent people follow the external desires. They get entangled in the snares of the wide-spread death. Therefore, the discerning people, having known what true immortality is in the midst of impermanent things, do not pray for anything here.'

Knowing this truth, even intellectually, will set us on the path to immortality. We shall then see that all along it was not humankind seeking immortality but that immortality was seeking us. 

Life of Pi: A Lesson on Leadership of the Self

Pritha Lal



I SAW THE MOVIE FIRST and then hurriedly finished the book.¹ Very few books will make you think as you read, to the point that you are so lost in the significance of the book and the plethora of its ramifications that you have to put a rein on your thoughts and come back to the page and reread the paragraph. I found myself doing that quite often, and the thoughts either emanated from or dissipated into this one phrase that kept repeating itself in my mind: ‘leadership of the self’.

The phrase is not rocket science and neither is the concept. As I watched this cinematographic masterpiece by Ang Lee and read this ‘story’ by Yann Martel, I was convinced this book will serve much more than being an exquisite example of modern-day literature. From a leadership perspective, this story has so much one can take back from and apply every day both in one’s personal and professional life.

The story details the adventurous accounts of a young man called Pi, for Piscine Molitor—yes, that is his name—alone in the Pacific; well almost alone, but for his lifeboat mate Richard Parker, a 500 lb Royal Bengal tiger. He and his feline friend are the sole survivors of a shipwreck. The tale is one of Pi’s amazing struggles with the elements of nature and his ability to withstand it all in the face of acute and dire adversity.

So, what are the lessons on leadership of the self that Pi teaches us? Several actually, and in addition every epiphany seemed to resonate with some profound teachings of the Holy Trio.

First, the End

Begin with the end in mind, even if you do not know what the ‘end’ looks like. Swami Vivekananda said: ‘Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life—think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea aside. This is the way to success.’²

One cannot stress the importance of goal setting. Numerous exercises and interventions exist in getting this right. Reality, however, can be a blur for some of us starting off on the path of self-leadership. Either we are thrown into it like Pi was, almost literally, or we are figuring out stuff as we go as to what we want to be once we grow up—I know I am trying to do that at the age of forty-two. Whatever your story is, with or without the tiger, it will have a happy ending if we work towards it.

Pi knows he has to survive the shipwreck with whatever he has around him. That is pretty much all he knows. The rest he learns as he goes: he improvises, almost gives up, and then gets back on track. The path of self-leadership is one of

determination. It is not easy because it needs self-discipline, it needs an inordinate amount of intrinsic motivation, and it needs the ability to learn and grow with whatever the sea throws at you. Keeping an external compass to guide you towards this goal is imperative. An internal compass of self-awareness cannot be overemphasized. It is not all doom and gloom with crazy storms though. It is immensely fulfilling at each step, because you get to set the measures of success and check them off as you go. It is about a journey where the ride and the milestones are just as exciting as the destination.

Knowledge Is Everywhere

Sri Ramakrishna, through his life and teachings, declared and demonstrated that ‘as many faiths, so many paths.’ This acutely simple yet intensely dynamic concept forms the core of the spiritual side of the main protagonist of this book. Pi had an insatiable urge to understand every faith he came across during his childhood in India. Not only did he watch it from a distance, he delved into the practice and philosophy of each. He tried to understand the truth in each without shame or ego. He asked questions, the right questions. He wanted to know why Christianity seemed more hurried than Hinduism. He wanted to understand the depth of Islam minus the perceptions his milieu created in him. He had a genuine thirst for knowledge. He assimilated all that various religious practitioners shared with him and also begrudgingly took in the hard-core practical life lessons his father showed him. He found a happy medium in accepting it all as means to traverse various journeys in life, some outward and some inward.

Knowledge is everywhere and can make us powerful. Knowledge alone dispels every bit of fear we may have as we face situations of having to be a leader of the self. Knowledge alone guides

and takes us from point A to point B. Knowledge alone can seem most elusive when you are in dire need for it. So when you have the time, when you have the bandwidth, take time out to learn. Learn your environment, the organic and the inorganic elements. Learn to accept without judgement. Learn to question with reason. Learn to change your own mind. Learn to stick to your gut feeling when you need to. Knowledge empowers like nothing can.

During my professional career, I have had the privilege of being mentored by some stalwarts in the Organization Development (OD) field. I have had the immense honour of listening to these individuals speak at conferences, meetings, and so forth. They were not the greatest presenters because they had the best slides and media; in fact, some of them spoke out of a piece of paper in their hands. No, they were powerful self-leaders because they were erudite beyond words. You could tell they sought knowledge in everything around them. Not only did they seek it but they chose to apply it in ways that were meaningful to them and those they interacted with.

Do not just Know Your Resources, Use Them

In the very first chapter of his *Karma Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda mentions that ‘intense activity is necessary; we must always work. We cannot live a minute without work’ (1.34). My God! Did Pi have a handle on that or what? Work is all that he did, and he used his resources with utmost prudence. From the ration of drinking water to Norwegian biscuits, from the ‘rain-maker’ to morphine syringes, from the flare guns to the orange lifeboat whistle, that kid knew what he had and had not and, more importantly, what he could do with it. Resources are lifelines in more ways than one; they certainly were in Pi’s case. In an organization it may not seem that

dramatic or drastic, but there is always room for optimization of the way we use our resources. Whether they are the books in the library or the members in your team, self-leadership involves a good measure of knowing, understanding, and utilization of resources.

Leveraging one's team is such a powerful resource for instance. The best leaders are those who surround themselves with the best team members, direct reporting notwithstanding. How many of us have been members of ad hoc cross-functional teams? Thinking back on why some of these teams thrived while others got embroiled in the quagmire of differences, I find that the teams in which each member was willing to ask and share and create a common pool of knowledge and understanding of all the resources available to them were very successful, and the success caused them to maintain relationships beyond that ad hoc project. Suddenly you had a 'friend' in a department you hardly had interaction with, and life was so much easier when a future interaction came about. Resource utilization involves more than self-knowledge, it involves a good amount of networking and trust.

Weaknesses Are only a Matter of Perception

Leadership, motivation, and all those glorious OD terms have no place for weaknesses these days. In fact, a lot of scholars suggest that performance development discussions should not even focus on weaknesses. Those are left for a different time when an individual can be redirected towards an expected behaviour—if only real life were that kind! In my experience of coaching team members at different levels of the organizational food chain, I have found quite a few of them having deep-rooted assumptions about their own weaknesses, often covered up with self-deprecating humour and such other coping mechanisms.

Pi was named after a swimming pool in Paris called Piscine Molitor. Fact also remains that kids can be cruel and unforgiving, so it was only a matter of time when his name assumed a less Gallic and more renal connotation—Piscine was often the subject to the question, 'Are you pissing?' This could have done nothing to help a young pre-teen child. But what did Pi do? Well, he turned his name around from Piscine to Pi—and Pi is the storyboard for all mathematical fiction that was ever written. Soon the 'irrational name' took on its own meaning and identity.

Self-leadership is not about looking outside for affirmation; it is about seeking it within oneself. It is appreciating the fact that, no matter what 'weaknesses' one may have, they are such only so long as our audience perceives them to be. Once you are no longer your own audience judging yourself, stand back, perform, and enjoy the applause. It will come.

In the words of the Holy Mother: 'You see, my son, it is not a fact that you will never face dangers. Difficulties always come but they do not last forever. You will see that they pass away like water under a bridge.'³

Self-Discipline: No Small Feat, no Small Rewards

Simulations and games in OD, like Desert or Jungle Survival, are very insightful interventions on various facets of individual, team, and organizational behaviour. To me, they also serve this wonderful purpose of creating self-awareness. Whether I was facilitating or participating in such an event, the last thought, often from many, was: 'Oh, wish I had done that, or I should have done this instead,' or the like. Real life does not offer too many 'wish-I-could-have' situations to mend or undo something that should not have happened in the first place.

Even though Pi is a fictional character, and his sea of storms is far from seeming organizational reality, yet there is so much truth in his sense of discipline that it almost left me in awe. He has six different plans in mind to overpower his feline nemesis, and the various scenarios end with him regurgitating these words: 'I can eat the biscuits, but God made tigers carnivorous, so I must learn to catch fish. If I don't, I'm afraid his last meal would be a skinny vegetarian boy.' Without giving away which plan works and how, it is enough to say that Pi survives the elements, only and only because of his sense of self-discipline both within and outside of himself. His faith and his knowledge see him through because he is true to them.

To observe self-discipline in the face of adversity is what makes the greatest of self-leaders. From Gandhi to Lincoln, or any self-motivated leader who rocks your boat, the common denominator is self-discipline. Self-discipline is not a grandiose thing demanding the performance of various yogic postures and deep breathing exercises before getting to work or facing a team meeting. It is something as simple as setting an example for oneself by following a set of best practices. Choose what works for you. It can be anything, from choosing to genuinely recognizing someone in your life that day to reading a page and sharing some insights; it can be making sure you are not reading emails while tucking your child in for the night. The standards we set for ourselves are the easiest to break if we choose to, but in the end those are the ones we face each time we look into the mirror, and chances are that most of us do that at least twice a day! Make those moments count.

Swamiji says: 'We are responsible for what we are; and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be

in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act.'⁴

Learning Is a Continuous Process

Sri Ramakrishna, in his infinite and divine wisdom, offered yet another key to success in his famous words, 'as long as I live, so long do I learn.' *Life of Pi* is a book about a journey, a journey that traverses milestones both within and outside of our selves. Pi makes the journey in his own way, with his goal in mind. We all have to do that for our own personal and professional fulfilment. Of course, there are so many ifs and buts along the way, but the author says it best when he states: 'To choose doubt as a philosophy of life is akin to choosing immobility as a means of transportation.'⁵

There is room for doubt only as a stepping stone, to find something or someone to dispel it and move on. That is where the process of continuous learning comes in. I cannot stress that enough, and the book is riddled with examples in which Pi does this with almost effortless perfection. Continuous learning comes with an open mind and a sincere ability to listen to your milieu without bias or judgement. Do what you will after that, but as a self-leader you can do the greatest justice to yourself and those around you by keeping your faculties open for learning at all times. There will be obstacles, some within your control, some outside. Know them, gauge them, deal with them, and move on.

The journey is interesting only because of the movement. The Vedic literature mentions a word: *charaiveti*, which means 'keep walking'. Without going into the context of the word, it suffices to say that the process of self-leadership is not a one-time goal, it is journey with various interesting milestones for us to cross them off our list. Find the Pi in you and keep moving. Happy journey!



(References on page 481)

Vivekananda: The Omniscient

Sudesh Garg

THE RISHIS of the Upanishads teach that the knowers of Brahman become ‘*sarvajnah sarvavid*; omniscient in general and all-knowing in detail’.¹ According to the scriptures, there is a class of *brahmavids*, knowers of Brahman, called *brahmavid-varishthas*, the best knowers of Brahman. Swami Vivekananda was a *brahmavid-varishtha*. He could, by a mere touch or glance, transmit supreme realization to the fittest aspirants—though those who were fortunate to live in his divine presence and were not as highly gifted also had their dormant spirituality instantly kindled. In Swamiji’s presence the reality of God was luminous, tangible, and drew one towards it unerringly. His ‘ideas were so clear, so powerful, and transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being.’² His personality was a revelation to all, for it embodied and manifested a high degree of purity. When he spoke, he carried his audience to the supernal heights of Consciousness, making them forget time, space, and body-consciousness. Many felt that they were in the presence of an incarnation of the Divine. Dr M Logan writes: ‘His Divine presence spread peace and tranquility wherever he went; the tumult of uncertainty departed from my soul at the sound of his magic voice. His very form and every mood were those of tender compassion and sympathy. None knew him but to love him; those of us who have had the royal good fortune to meet him in the flesh will some day realize that we have met the true incarnation of the divine One!’³

Josephine Macleod said that the thing that held her in Swamiji was his ‘unlimitedness’. She could never fathom its amazing vastness. Sister Christine writes: ‘Having once seen and heard him, what could one do but follow? Was he not an Incarnation of the Divine, the Divine which lures man on until he finds himself again in his lost kingdom?’⁴

Lillian Montgomery, who came in touch with Swamiji in June 1900, writes:

He rose to speak—phrases flowed forth—without effort, but, every word was moulded round a light that brought a new significance to its meaning—he was living the very thought he was expressing. There seemed an absence of the sense of ego. As if the outer form were absorbing a light of intelligence pouring from an infinite source! He was revealing a realm of consciousness unknown to me. I saw as it were a lake of consciousness that filled space back of him, and somehow focussed and was pouring through his words. Veil after veil was falling from my mind’s eye—a new universe was being revealed—the possibility of personality—relationship of the individual soul with divine.⁵

Swamiji once revealed his transcendental nature in an inspired mood: ‘I am without form, without limit, beyond space, beyond time; I am in everything, I am the basis of the universe—everywhere am I. I am Existence Absolute. Bliss Absolute. Knowledge Absolute. I am It. I am It.’⁶

Universal Mind

Swamiji could ‘size up’, almost infallibly, a human face as soon as he saw it. It was because

his mind was always connected to the universal mind. He could see a person and read the contents of his or her mind at a glance. Through this power he could understand a person's past, present, and future. On many occasions his students found him answering and solving unexpressed doubts and questions that were troubling them at the moment.

Josiah Goodwin had been a worldly man with variegated experiences. From the moment his eyes fell upon the swami, he forsook all worldly pursuits and offered himself to work as a stenographer and take down all of Swamiji's lectures. Swamiji 'told him many incidents of his past, and this created such a moral revolution in him that he became his most ardent disciple, even to the point of attending to Swamiji's personal needs.'⁷

In order to arouse his disciples to action, Swamiji once told Sharatchandra Chakravarty that they were once Vedic rishis who had come in different forms. He could see as clear as daylight that they had infinite power within them. He told them to give up all thought of wealth and fame, even the desire for *mukti*, freedom, and to rouse up that power and work for the welfare of society.

Madame Emma Calvé, the celebrated opera singer, once visited him in a depressed mood. She had heard of an Indian yogi who had helped some of her friends. As she entered the room, she saw him seated in a noble attitude of meditation. After a pause he spoke without looking up: "My child," he said, "what a troubled atmosphere you have about you! Be calm! It is essential'" (1.450). 'Then,' narrates Calvé, 'in a quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man who did not even know my name talked to me of my secret problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends. It seemed miraculous, supernatural. "How do you know all this?" I asked at last. "Who has talked of me to you?" ... "No one

has talked to me," he answered gently. "Do you think it is necessary? I read in you as in an open book"' (ibid.).

Madame Calvé said that she became happy and vivacious again. It was neither hypnotism nor mesmerism, it was the effect of his powerful will, the purity and intensity of his purpose, which emptied her brain of all its feverish complexities and broadened her understanding of truth.

A disciple from Madras spoke of him:

He frequently had to descend to the level of his questioners and to translate his soaring thoughts into their language. He would often anticipate several questions ahead and give answers that would satisfy the questioners at once. ... At times many men's thoughts were his. He would answer scores of questioners at one time and silence them all. Soft and forgiving as he was to those on whom his grace rested, one had to live in his presence as in the vicinity of a dangerous explosive. The moment a bad thought entered one's mind, it would flash across his also' (370-1).

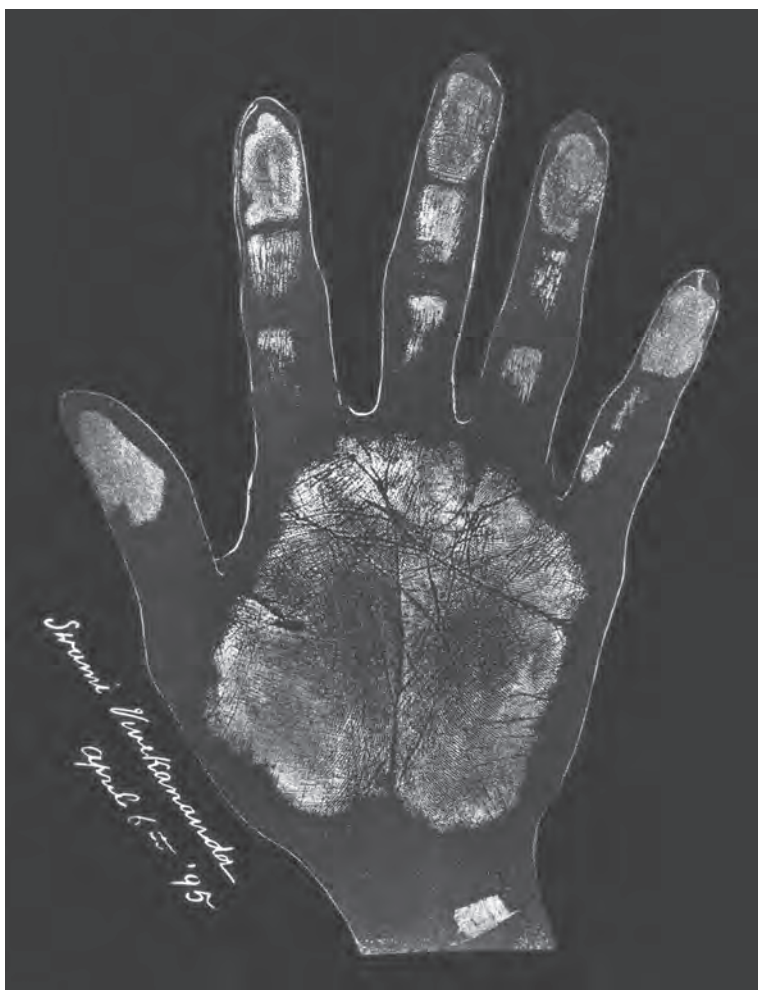
As a Guru and with His Brother Disciples

As a true spiritual preceptor he knew the inner nature of his disciples. He directed each on the path that would facilitate the manifestation of his or her dormant spirituality. Josephine Macleod declared that Swamiji was everything to everyone. Each one could take what suited him best. 'From him I took mainly *energy* and manifested this most. Because this was what did me good and I know that it was best for me. But when I used to tell Sister Nivedita, "He is all energy," she used to answer, "He is all tenderness." I would argue, "But I never felt it." The answer was, "That was not meant for you." Because he could give to each one according to his or her nature and according to the way that would lead him to the divine.'⁸

Leon Landsberg was directed by Swamiji onto the path of bhakti. Because of his indifference to his personal needs and his compassion for the poor, the path of devotion was best suited for his emotional nature. He was one of the first among Swamiji's disciples to be initiated into sannyasa and the first to be sent out to teach.

Through his penetrating insight, Swamiji knew the tendency of each disciple and gave each a special ideal and a special form of meditation, so that each could develop according to his or her capacity and discover the Divine within. In 1895 Swamiji was holding classes for a few earnest students at Thousand Island Park. He intended to initiate a few on Monday, 8 July. Mary Funke and Christine Greenstidel arrived there on Saturday, July 6. He wanted to know whether they were fit students, ready to be initiated with others. With his rare power of reading into the inner mind of a person, he saw that they would make progress in spiritual life. Their mettle, capacity, and character stood revealed to him. He also saw that one of them would be indissolubly connected with India, which eventually came to pass.⁹

Through his power of omniscience, Swamiji knew the potentialities and limitations of each one of his monastic *gurubhais*, brother disciples, as well. He saw that they were spiritual giants and assigned to each a suitable work to perpetuate the life and message of their Master. Sri Ramakrishna had made him the leader, and all his brother monks accepted him without reservation. He tied them together with his great love, and they followed him unquestioningly



Swami Vivekananda's palm print

in fulfilling the mission of their Master. Swami Ramakrishnananda was sent to Madras to start a centre there and came to be known as 'the guardian angel of the South'. Swami Premananda, recognized as the partial incarnation of Radha by Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, was referred to as the 'mother of the math'—devotees would come at odd hours sometimes when the dinner was over, and Premananda himself would cook for them and sometimes give them his own food. Swamiji assigned him to spread the message of universal love and harmony in East Bengal, now Bangladesh, in 1901.

Swamis Abhedananda and Saradananda went to England and America in 1896 to preach

Vedanta at the behest of Swamiji. Abhedananda carried on the Vedanta work in the West for the next twenty-five years. Saradananda was called back to India to become the secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was through the hard labour and strenuous efforts of Swami Trigunatitananda that the *Udbodhan* magazine came into existence in 1899, of which Swamiji had thought of in 1896. In 1902 he was sent to America to replace Swami Turiyananda, whose health had broken down.

He made Swami Brahmananda, of whom their Master said had the keen intelligence to run a kingdom, the president of the Order. He made Turiyananda, who devoted much time to studying scriptures, teach the junior members of the math. He was playful and full of fun with his *gurubhais*, especially with the rustic Swami Adbhutananda, the simple Swami Subodhananda, and the old Swami Advaitananda.

Knower of Truth in all Its Phases

Swamiji's concern was not only with the spiritual, he also envisaged an all-round growth for men and women the world over. He was interested in every phase of human activity and every department of knowledge. He perceived the one Reality manifesting in the many and producing a harmonious melody around. In the course of one of his lectures he said: 'The materialist is right! There is but One. Only he calls that One Matter and I call it God!'¹⁰ The one eternal Truth stood revealed to him in all its multiple sidedness.

Following his appearance at the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji was introduced to a group of noted scientists who had gathered in the city to attend the Electrical Congress. His knowledge of electricity amazed the scientists. He proved to them that the principles of Vedanta were truly scientific, that some of the most wonderful discoveries of modern science were only

rediscoveries of what had been found ages ago by Vedic seers. He gave a clear exposition of cosmology, evolution, relation of matter and force, and pointed out the areas of reconciliation between the theories of science and those of Vedanta. His description of physiology, the nervous system and its relation to the brain, and the relation between states of mind and nervous changes drew the attention of a number of noted physicians and physiologists. Swamiji was saturated not only with Vedanta but with the philosophical and scientific outlook of the West as well.

One of his disciples noted: 'The vast range of his mental horizon perplexed and enraptured me. From the Rig Veda to *Raghuvamsha*, from the metaphysical flights of the Vedanta philosophy to modern Kant and Hegel, the whole range of ancient and modern literature and art and music and morals, from the sublimities of the ancient Yoga to the intricacies of a modern laboratory—everything seemed clear to his field of vision.'¹¹ In the West Swamiji came in contact with many famous and influential thinkers, philosophers, writers, and artists. They were all amazed at his scintillating intellect when they found that the swami was more knowledgeable than them in their respective fields.

Through his penetrating insight, Swamiji could see past traditions, cultures, societies, and the future of nations as well. Europe was on the edge of a volcano, he said. If the fire were not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it would erupt. This he said of Europe in 1895, when it was prosperous and at peace. Twenty years later came the explosion. Once in a prophetic mood he said that the next upheaval that was to bring about a new epoch would come from Russia or China. This he said when China was still under the autocratic rule of the Manchu Emperors, and Czarist Russia was sending the noblest of her people to Siberian mines. He conceived of an integration


of all varied systems of world cultures and religions into one universal religion. India had the priceless gift and the sacred task to offer it to humanity—the teaching of the immortality of the Atman, the divinity of humankind, and the unity of all existence.

Swamiji had accepted Madame Calvé's invitation to accompany her, with some other devotees, to Egypt on the Orient Express. At Eleusis in Greece Calvé recalled: 'He explained its mysteries to us, and led us from altar to altar, from temple to temple, describing the processions that were held in each place, intoning the ancient prayers, showing us the priestly rites.'¹² In 1896 Swamiji visited Rome with the Seviars. Long before they arrived in Rome Swamiji narrated to his companions the glories of the ancient city. As he went from place to place, his observations and knowledge of history and architecture threw a new light around the monuments. He traced the rise of the imperial idea under the Roman Empire and described its decline. Those who were with him remarked: 'This is wonderful Swami! You seem to know every stone in Rome!'¹³

This knowledge and power to understand things clearly that Swamiji had does not seem to come only from his keen observations or tremendous study of history, but also from his capacity to access the *mahakarana*, the great cause, from which everything that exists has issued forth. It is revealed in his reply to Mr Allan's jovial greeting: "Well, Swami, I see you are in Alameda"—he had gravely said, "No, Mr Allan, I am not in Alameda; Alameda is in me."¹⁴

Swamiji knew the whence and wither, the whys and wherefores of things, of human minds, of nations, of creation and dissolution. Even the mystery of life and death held no secret for him, 'for birth and death lie prostrate at my feet', as he has once declared.¹⁵ In 1890 Swamiji went to Rishikesh with some of his brother monks

and there he became dangerously ill. His pulse seemed to have stopped and his body became cold. One of the *gurubhais* put his ear near the swami's mouth and heard the words: 'Cheer up, my boys. I shall not die.'¹⁶ Later he told them that, during that apparently unconscious state, he had seen that he had a particular mission in the world to fulfil and that until he had accomplished that mission, he would have no rest.

A soul of infinite radiance had put on a human garb, at the supplications of the Divine Child—Sri Ramakrishna—to shed its radiance on millions all over the world. Its mission being completed, that great soul sped into the region of indivisible light, whence it had come. 

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Hologram Avatars and Rainbow Bodies

Niraj Kumar

DEATH FOLLOWS LIFE like its shadow, but can death be optional in the future? Dmitri Itskov, a thirty-two year Russian billionaire and tech entrepreneur, has launched an international social movement to interest people in immortality. The research into neuroscience and human consciousness will be fused with the idea of transferring human minds into robots with the ultimate aim of extending human 'life' indefinitely. Dubbed 2045 Initiative, Itskov is selling his idea of android bodies as the next step in human evolution.¹

Itskov's programme includes a developmental push to understand human consciousness and realize technology in order to transfer consciousness from human bodies into robotic avatars. His 2045 Initiative has four stages. In the first stage, scientists will figure out, by 2020, how to control robots via brain-machine interface. Such instruments are already in operation for simple functions like switching on lights, televisions, and so on. In the second stage, the aim is to place a human brain into a working robot by 2025 and have that person's consciousness—memories, personality, and everything else that makes up the 'self'—transferred along with it. It will be like downloading a PDF file from the brain to the robot. The next stage is to create robots with artificial brains to which human consciousness can be uploaded by 2035. Finally, completely disembodied consciousness, termed as 'hologram avatar', will be the mere version of a person's mind by 2045.

Ray Kurzweil, Google's director of engineering and one of the many interested in Itskov's

Global Congress, had earlier announced that 'immortality is twenty years away'.² He firmly believes that with the support of the fusion of biology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence (AI), humankind can reverse the process of aging. Biomedical gerontologist Aubrey de Grey, together with Michael Rae, wrote a magnum opus titled *Ending Aging*.³ He is confident that humans can live for a thousand years. Human life expectancy has more than doubled within a century—from thirty years in 1900 to sixty-two years in 1985, and seventy-five years now.

The Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2009 was given to three US scientists⁴ for their path-breaking work on the 'immortality' enzyme called 'telomerase', which help cells multiply without damage and holds the key to delay aging. The length of telomeres, as holding the key to prolonged life, is the latest buzz among scientists. Another international constellation of research teams published a promising finding in October 2009, maintaining that the earlier presumption about animals and plants developing different genetic programmes for cell death was not correct. The team found that cell death in plants, animals, as well as humans are evolutionarily related and function in a similar way. They have found clues of the long life of cells in a living system in a particular evolutionarily conserved Protein-TUDOR-SN.⁵ Cells that lack this protein experience premature programmed death.

A common understanding that is beginning to emerge is that if plants and trees and other animals can live for centuries, cannot the processes be replicated at the human level, thereby

producing ‘negligible senescence’?⁶ Can biomedical gerontology—the fusion of nanotechnology with molecular biology and AI—herald a new era in which humankind can defer death indefinitely?

Convergence of Technology

Robert J Sawyer, a science fiction writer from Canada, used in his book *Mindscan*⁷ the theme of eternal living. His premise is based on the fact that in the near future human beings would be able to duplicate themselves while still alive by copying their consciousness into robotic bodies to ensure long lives. However, most transhumanists, who believe in fusing humans with machines, base their arguments using Ray Kurzweil’s ideas. Kurzweil’s bold declaration that by 2029 machine consciousness would surpass human consciousness—in the Turing Test⁸—raised many eyebrows. In his *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever*,⁹ Kurzweil and co-author Terry Grossman formulated the ‘three bridges’ concept to attain immortality. Bridge one uses the current knowledge of biomedical advances to dramatically slow down aging and disease processes. Bridge two is the biotechnology revolution that would provide the tools to reprogram biology. Bridge three is nanotechnology, which will help rebuild bodies and brains at the molecular level. By transcending the limitations of biology humans can achieve an indefinite life-extension.

Bruce Duncan, of the Terasem Movement Foundation, claims that their Lifonaut Project allows the storage of human qualities as ‘mindfiles’. There are about 12,000 mindfiles, so far, stored online at www.lifonaut.com. In the future a scientist will use, through AI programs, a mindfile and a person’s DNA to create a digital clone of that person, which can interact with future family members and others. Duncan

states: ‘Mindfiles are database files with uploaded digital information (videos, pictures, documents, and audio recordings) about a person’s unique characteristics (such as mannerisms, attitudes, values, and beliefs).’¹⁰

The Terasem Movement Foundation has created Bina48, an android based on the mindfile of Bina Rothblatt, the co-founder. Android Robot Bina48 continues to ‘acquire new experiences and knowledge by interacting with people (using videocams in eyes, face-recognition software, and Dragon voice-recognition software)’ (ibid.). Robotician Hiroshi Ishiguro of Osaka University has built his own mechanical twin to see how humans react to lifelike machines.¹¹

Understanding the Roots of Death in Biology

How do cells age? Can this be delayed at the cellular level? If one can understand the biology of cellular death, biological senescence can be delayed and aging slowed down. A group of researchers have linked cellular aging with the loss of a chemical, phosphatidylcholine, in cell membrane.¹² In a young individual cell membrane contains nearly sixty per cent of phosphatidylcholine. This significantly reduces to ten per cent among the elderly, while hard fat as well as cholesterol accumulate in cell membranes causing degeneration. The body does make this chemical, but the requirement increases with age. By supplementing phosphatidylcholine the aging process can be slowed down. It is now established how the length of telomeres determines cellular division, thereby affecting longevity. Normally, a cell line undergoes fifty generations of division. Scientists have discovered the clue that increased levels of this distinctive phosphatidylcholine are a result of in vitro senescence. Human genes are sequenced into chromosomes, and telomeres are analogous

to the plastic tip of shoe-laces, which prevent the deterioration of DNA sequences. Each time a cell divides, telomeres shorten in length. When it reduces significantly, cells stop dividing and organs begin to fail. A group of Ashkenazi Jews, which had eighty-six very old people with an average age of ninety-seven years, were selected for finding the reasons of longevity.¹³ It was traced to certain mutant genes that were responsible for the hyperactive system that produces the telomerase enzyme. This enzyme was responsible for keeping safe a sufficient length of telomeres tip, which delayed senescence. By inducing mutation in relevant genes, telomeres length can be maintained. This can be another way of delaying aging.

Another group of scientists at Harvard is working on the idea of tricking normal body cells to behave like germ cells—sperm or ova. There are two different types of cells in the human body: somatic and germ. Somatic cells constitute the body, and germ cells, which are practically immortal, are responsible for progeny. These have been found to have a high degree of immunity and resistance to various diseases that somatic cells suffer. Scientists have tricked a worm, *c. elegans*, to behave like germ cells resulting in a prolonged lifespan.¹⁴

There is a new focus on understanding the process of Programmed Cell Death (PCD) that will help in prolonging life. If the selective elimination of unwanted cells in multicellular organism is not done, the organism will die. This is what happens with cancer, as the mechanism of PCD fails to control or eliminate multiplying cells. AIDS is caused when there is death of helper immune cells, T-cells. The death of certain brain neurons causes Alzheimer and Parkinson diseases. By properly understanding PCD such deep-level diseases can be eliminated. Earlier it was thought that there are differences in PCD in

plants and animals, but a recent finding by an international team showed that plants as well as animals undergo PCD in the same way, that is by breaking the protein TUDOR-SN. TUDOR-SN or SNDI protein is a ubiquitous protein found in all animals and each organ of the human body at a similar level. Cells that lack TUDOR-SN protein often experience premature PCD. TUDOR-SN holds the key to regulating PCD. This team has therefore put the focus on the evolutionarily conserved protein TUDOR-SN as holding the key to long life. Certain plants are as old as five thousand years, and some organisms like turtles survive to almost three hundred years. Scientists are trying to achieve a breakthrough in properly extracting the factors responsible for longevity and applying them biomedically to enhance human life.

Some researchers are also working on unravelling the process behind the power of renewal in various animals. Certain frogs can renew legs. Lizards and salamanders also have this property. Even our skin cells have the ability to regenerate. This mechanism is being thoroughly examined for replication in treatments. Therapeutic cloning is currently popular, and there is a great rush to grow embryonic stem cells into organs. Recently, Chinese scientists succeeded in using somatic cells to create embryonic stem cells in mice, and successful breeding was achieved among the similarly-produced mice.

In 2012 British scientists pinned their hopes on flatworms, which, after examining their ability to repeatedly regenerate, they believe could live forever. Nottingham University researchers managed to create a colony of more than 20,000 flatworms from one original worm by chopping it into pieces and observing each section grow into a new complete worm with brains, guts, skin, and new muscles.

They found that flatworms can continuously maintain the length of the telomeres during regeneration. Once this mechanism is unravelled, humankind can learn to maintain the telomerase length and hence live longer and potentially become immortal, provided the human cells continue to reproduce without telomerase shortening.

The fusion of biotechnology and nanotechnology will unleash changes of gigantic proportions in prolonging lifespans. Biotechnology will help reverse ageing, and nanotechnology will accelerate human capabilities. Scientists like Robert Freitas Jr claim that respirocytes, nano-red blood corpuscles, can be built and injected into the human blood.¹⁵ These machines will be a hundred times more efficient than a biological system. Our stamina will grow manifold and the biological system will seem very sluggish in comparison. Similarly, there can be nano-white blood cells that will be quicker to respond and destroy bacteria and save the body from infection. These kinds of nanomachines will destroy even cancer cells in a few seconds. Kurzweil terms such emerging machines as 'nanobots'. Recently, scientists have succeeded in removing cholesterol plaque from coronary arteries using nano-gold particles, and drugs have been delivered successfully to locations in mammals using nanotechnology. Prospects are bright and achievements are occurring at an exponential pace.

Nanobots are expected to supplement our immune system within the next two decades. Carbon nanotubes are being used to build artificial neurons, which results in a better performance. The National Science Foundation, USA, has injected millions of dollars in this specific area of nano-bioengineering. But the clue to immortality lies more in the brain than in the body. A human is an aggregate of 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion body cells.

Therefore, it is the brain that is being understood with an astonishing speed.

Status of the Brain

Dr Henry Markam, director of the Blue Brain Project in Geneva, is optimistic about constructing models of the human brain within a decade.¹⁶ The Blue Brain Project is working on building simulated brain models of different mammals like rats, cats, monkeys, and finally the human brain. This project is in fact creating exact replicas down to synaptic connections by simulating various brain regions. In humans the project has sketched four hundred brain regions containing different types of neurons and neurotransmitters. Now, the project will simulate the human brain by actually building up neurons at morphological-electrical-molecular levels.

As of August 2012 the largest simulations made are of 'meso-circuits', containing around a hundred cortical columns. Such simulations involved approximately one million neurons and one billion synapses, about the scale of a honey bee brain. A rat brain neocortical simulation, at twenty-one million neurons, will be achieved by the end of 2014. Markam claims that a full human brain simulation, eighty-six billion neurons, should be possible by 2023, provided sufficient funding is received.

The next major breakthrough in brain research has come from the IBM team under Dharmendra Modha, who managed to simulate the computing complexity of a cat's brain with one billion neurons. Scientists created a fresh algorithm, Blue Matter, which aims to replicate connections between all the human brain's cortical and sub-cortical locations. Within six months scientists were able to simulate the connections of one billion neurons from just one hundred thousand. IBM's SYNAPSE, modelled 530 billion neurons in November 2012, which is more than



the total number of neurons in a human brain. Though the model is very slow, this augurs well for simulating a human brain.

The Synthetic Brain Project, being funded by the National Science Foundation, USA, is building neurons from carbon nano-tubules. The team has already synthesized the vision system and synthetic cochlea as well as the successful interface with a real brain. The Synthetic Brain Project aims to replicate neuro-plasticity, the ability of neurons to learn and adapt in an environment through experience and the brain's capacity to produce new neurons as well as connections within a few hours. Carbon-nano-tubules used in the project are found to be more efficient than biological neurons, as these can be connected in all directions in contrast to biological neurons, which have limited connections. Synthetic

neurons may become better learners than biological neurons. Once the Synthetic Brain Project achieves a breakthrough, a more efficient prosthetic brain will be available to humanity!

To circumvent the problem of plasticity, scientists are traversing various paths. A group of researchers in the UK developed a computer using a slime mould—Plasmobot—with light and electromagnetic stimuli to trigger chemical reactions. By developing this line of experiment, scientists can use a self-replicating biological organism to create a neural network that will have the power to grow fresh neurons in response to environmental stress.

Another team has found that glial cells, which outnumber neurons and were till now considered the dark matter of the brain, have in fact an important role to play in the brain's

immune system. Andrew Koob, author of *The Root of Thought*¹⁷ put astrocyte, a kind of glial cell, as responsible for the creative and imaginative capacities of the human brain. Astrocytes work like an analog-network and produce calcium-waves, unlike neurons, which produce Na⁺/K⁺waves (sodium-potassium-waves). These astrocytes are found to be more connected and in command of the 'biochemical chatter' than neurons and also to increase manifold the brain's computing power.

The Bernstein Centre for Computational Neuroscience, Germany, has launched a grand project, Foci: Neurotechnology, to understand how a brain works during various activities. Neural mapping by cognitive neuroscientists is almost complete. Even a wisdom network has been located in the anterior cingulate cortex. The growing convergence between cognitive neuroscience and AI is making the creation of biological robots feasible. Scientists are working on culturing biological neurons and then interfacing this with AI. They are optimistic that such robots will exhibit emotional qualities of the biological world. Tiangfu Wu developed the Einstein Robot and caused a lot of worldwide interest in his project. This robot frowns or smiles reflecting on the situation. Machine consciousness enthusiasts are trying to build higher and higher intelligence networks and developing liquid computing that can handle infinite parallel commands.

These enthusiasts take their cue from Francis Crick's idea, from the *Astonishing Hypothesis*, that consciousness has neurobiological roots. If the structure and function of the brain can be replicated, consciousness can emerge even in machines. Michal Vassar of the Singularity Institute and his colleagues are publicizing that a conscious mind has started to emerge in machines. A team of AI researchers have found this in their experiments on evolving robots. A colony of robots

with neural circuitry of a mere thirty genes learnt to communicate after the fiftieth generation, and some of them even learnt to lie.¹⁸ A few emerged as heroes willing to sacrifice themselves for the survival of the colony. The experiments were conducted at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology under the guidance of Dario Floreano.

In February 2013 Stanford's NeuroGrid Research team developed a new computer model of a brain with one million neurons that works just as fast as a live brain does. The new artificial brain, called Neurogrid, is a lighter and cheaper version of supercomputer models. It is also much more energy efficient, using just five watts of electricity, compared to the eight megawatts that Blue Gene/Q Sequoia, SYNAPSE's supercomputer uses.¹⁹

But, will a synthetic human brain ever be as conscious as a biological human brain? That is the debate! Is consciousness inherent in mere form—the connectivity of neurons? Is consciousness an epiphenomenon of the structure of matter? Or does consciousness have trans-physical roots? Within a decade, when prosthetic brains will be available and can be integrated successfully with biological brains, there will be a greater leap in human intelligence. The innovations will grow at a much higher exponential rate. The human brain cannot learn and remember more than about two bits per second. It is very sluggish in comparison with the learning ability of the machine. But this would very well complement radical extension in our longevity. Once aging is eliminated, there would be a problem of memory accumulation. Machine-brain consciousness will resolve that crisis. Once our memories and brain functions are fully understood in this decade, there will be an attempt to download that into machines. A machine-brain interface would make it more practical.

The Future of Immortals


There is a renewed focus on popularizing the contemplative path to immortality. There is a strong tradition of *mahasiddhas*, great perfected ones, among the Buddhists. In modern times the story of Saint Ramalinga Swamigal in Tamil Nadu has been properly documented and authenticated. On 30 January 1874 Ramalinga disappeared from a room, filled with chanting devotees, as rays of violet light.

In Christianity the story of Jesus Christ is basically a story of immortality and conquest over death. Tibetan Buddhist sects include techniques to guide consciousness to take *bardo*, re-birth, or even to transfer the consciousness to any material or biological *phowa*, object. The disappearance of the physical body after death has been regularly reported by the Buddhists, what they term as *jalus*, rainbow body. The masters of the Dzogchen tradition are able to emanate rainbows when they die and leave behind only nails and hair, the rest of the body transmutes into light. Recently, in 2011, a case was reported in Sichuan: *mahasiddha* Lama Achuk Rinpoche's body shrank from 1.8 metres to merely 1 inch in a week and rainbows appeared at the place. Close to the Tibetan tradition is the case of Hambo Lama Itigelov, the head of the Burayat Buddhists, who died in 1927 but whose body continues to be in a living condition even after eighty-six years; a case that has become a puzzle for scientists. Even the present Russian President Vladimir Putin visited his shrine recently in April 2013. The Zhang Zhung tradition of Bon Buddhism has developed detailed methods to obtain a rainbow body through the practice of deep meditation.

The scientific and contemplative path towards immortality is being accelerated. When the pace of the development of the outer world becomes so fast as to entrain with the inner world, the

biological necessity of death itself might get obliterated. Digital immortality would be succeeded by real biological immortality, since there would be no necessity for death. Both kinds of immortality would converge. The most advanced digital immortal, hologram avatar, and the biological immortal rainbow body appear similar in form. Both lack materiality and disembodied consciousness. But, unlike hologram avatars, rainbow bodies are self-conscious and have the power to bring non-local transference. Rainbow bodies have the option to cross over materiality at will. These bodies appear as transfigurations and also make simultaneous appearances, as has been documented in the biography of Buddhist saints like Padmasambhava and Milarepa.

The possibility of digital immortality will breed inertia. There will not be existential dread. Without fear of death, the impulse to develop the outer world would disappear. Humankind might be reduced to a 'biological caterpillar', as envisaged by the immortality protagonists. But rainbow immortality can be achieved only through incessant creative urge, meditation, and compassion.

Creative people will still long for a rainbow body more than the hologram avatar, since it is the biological immortality harnessed through altruism, compassion, and meditation that provides the twin pleasure of *svatantrata*, freedom, and ananda, bliss, simultaneously. 

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Vedanta Meets Science

Rajeshwar Mukhopadhyaya

EVERY BEING IS naturally inclined to seek happiness and to avoid pain. Mental reactions to sights and sounds, the drive to fulfil physiological and psychological needs, and even the struggle for existence are all propelled by the urge for happiness. Though all humans reach out towards the sources of pleasure, few obtain it, and still fewer discover that delight and happiness through the senses is ephemeral. Enlightened minds discover that everlasting happiness lies in knowing the Truth. The human search for Truth, which constitutes a higher nature of humankind, has ushered in various branches of knowledge and learning. Swami Vivekananda says: 'The goal of mankind is knowledge. That is the one ideal placed before us by Eastern philosophy. Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Pleasure and happiness come to an end.'¹

Objective and Subjective Search

Science and philosophy are two noble branches of knowledge. With its passion to understand the

world, science has established a commanding influence today. The spin-offs, in the form of various technologies, are the gifts of science to humankind. Scientific search for truth is restricted within the domain of objective investigation, and such investigations are invariably known to be relative and partial. Sir Arthur Eddington says: 'Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics.'² Hence, these deeper aspects that are unattainable by objective methods require further investigation by adopting means that can overcome the barriers of objectivity.

Philosophy delves into the various levels of consciousness and opens the subjective side of human nature, the 'knower', for investigation. It enables humankind to see deep within itself. The world of the subject is as vast and complex as the external world. Hence, if science and philosophy can combine harmoniously, the journey towards Truth will be smooth and swift.

Indian philosophies have been contributing immensely to the storehouse of human wisdom

from time immemorial. *Darshana*, which in Sanskrit means 'seeing', is wrongly translated as 'philosophy'. Unlike most Western philosophies, *darshana* is obviously not based only on philosophical speculations but has its roots in the immediate and direct experience of the Reality. This Reality transcends the subject-object duality.

The Vedas, constituting the supreme realizations of the rishis, are the fountainhead of all Indian philosophies. The religion and philosophies of Buddhism and Jainism, though they attack the Vedas, can hardly deny their influence on their philosophical structures, either positively or negatively. There are six Indian orthodox philosophical systems, and the Vedanta philosophy is the most sublime and influential.

The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas, for this reason they are called the Vedanta. Vedanta philosophy is the systematization of the Upanishadic thoughts, supported by the Bhagavadgita and the *Brahma Sutra*. Acharya Shankara accomplished the mighty task of coherently explaining Upanishadic teachings and interpreting them in the light of Advaita, non-duality. The aim of Advaita philosophy is to establish the non-dual nature of the ultimate Reality. In order to explain the multiplicity of the phenomenal existence Acharya Shankara introduced the unique concept of *maya*, without compromising the non-dual nature of Reality. Although several other schools of Vedanta like the Vishishtadvaita, Shivadvaita, and Shaktadvaita came up with their own interpretations, Acharya Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, with its robust logical framework, outshined all others. Thus the Advaita as an experience matured into a potent philosophical system that was constantly being authenticated and fine-tuned by subsequent rishis.

This highest experience of Advaita is not associated with that of the senses or the mind. It

is supra-mundane, transcendental, and beyond the purview of so-called rationalism. At the same time, this lofty philosophy does not indicate that logical reasoning has no place in it, nor denies its importance. Vedanta recognizes the rational mind's limitation in discovering the absolute Reality. Therefore, Vedanta transcends the system of logic and wants to intuit the Truth directly. We find Gödel's theorem³ and Russell's paradox⁴, the two remarkable contributions in the field of mathematical logic, attesting to the limitation of logic. Vedanta philosophy accepts three methods of investigation: Shruti, scriptures; *yukti*, logic; and *anubhuti*, experience. Logical analysis is a powerful tool for the search of Truth, and as a matter of fact forms the bedrock of Vedantic enquiry. But in order to transcend logic, Vedanta refers to the Shruti, the Vedas, and one's own experience, which has to finally tally with the Shruti. Acharya Shankara's Advaita Vedanta makes the transition from Advaita Vedanta as a philosophy to Advaita as an experience.

In the modern times Swami Vivekananda rejuvenated the Advaita Vedanta of Acharya Shankara by emphasizing its experiential aspect. For centuries this high philosophy had fallen in the hands of pundits bent only on discussing its merits. Swamiji also gave a modern interpretation to some of its philosophical structures, bringing about the syncretization of Vedanta and the scientific thought of the day. As a young boy Swamiji had interested himself with philosophy and science, and was then trained as an Advaitin by his Master. Another unique aspect of Swamiji's exposition of Advaita Vedanta is that he did not discard the best thoughts of other schools of Vedanta. 'Harmony' and 'syncretism' were the watchwords of his practical Vedanta. Both the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Reality were endorsed by him, and consequently Vedanta evolved as the science of Consciousness.

The Quantum Subject-Object

Recent developments in the physical sciences are fascinating. Starting from rigorous objectivity, it is now entering into the realm of subjectivity. The twentieth century witnessed some marvellous discoveries in physics. The formulation of the uncertainty principle by Werner Heisenberg in the field of quantum mechanics opened up the floodgate of new concepts and ushered in a revolution within science. The principle not only gifted physicists a theory to explore and understand events at the sub-atomic level but also welcomed philosophical insights into it. The old Cartesian division of mind and matter shrunk into insignificance, yielding to new thoughts that involve consciousness and subjectivity in physical observations. These quantum principles were supported by experiments that were later applied to create modern technologies. Accordingly, the detached observer-scientist of classical physics is no longer a detached observer looking at something separate from oneself. One is both the actor and the participator in the great quantum drama of existence. Great scientists like Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Pauli, Max Born, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, Neils Bohr, and others gathered in Brussels at the fifth Solvay Congress in 1927 to discuss the consequences of quantum theories. The meeting facilitated the interpretation of the subject over matter.⁵

Eugene Wigner stated that it is impossible to describe quantum mechanical processes without referring to consciousness. Erwin Schrödinger, one of the pioneers of quantum mechanics, declared: 'The only possible alternative is simply to keep to the immediate experience that consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there *is* only one thing and that what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one

thing, produced by a deception (the Indian Maya).'⁶ He was a versatile scientist who made significant contributions to molecular biology and philosophy. Later Bell's theorem, Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox,⁷ Schrödinger's cat,⁸ and Von Neumann/Wigner interpretation⁹ and so on, established the primacy of the subject over objective investigation.

Mathematics serves as a powerful tool in the development of scientific theories and hence plays an important role in the quest for truth. It is the heart of all theoretical and practical sciences today. It is so elegant and foolproof that Sir James Jeans, the famous astronomer, metaphorically said: 'God is a mathematician.' But this sovereignty of mathematics suffered a serious blow owing to a paradox discovered by Bertrand Russell. In fact, Russell's paradox raised serious objections against mathematical formalism, which finally put an 'end to the logical honeymoon'. Also Kurt Gödel's theorem established the inadequacy of mathematical methods in its search for truth. Truth cannot be caught in the net of mathematical formalism, as no system is consistent and complete at the same time. An attempt to trace the Reality using mathematical formalism is as good as to empty the 'well of truth with a leaky bucket'.

Vedanta is not simply a philosophy but a science of Consciousness or Reality. Though rigorously logical, it transcends the framework of logic and leads to the immediate experience of the Reality. Many stalwarts of modern science like Schrödinger, Julian Huxley, Jagadish Bose, and others praised this lofty philosophy. Vedantic cosmology has many principles similar to that of modern cosmological theories. This is also true about some other theories like that of evolution. Thus, it is observed that Vedanta philosophy, which chiefly deals with the subject, has also contributed to the field of the object.

Swamiji and Modern Science

The theory of the universe as propounded in Vedanta has striking similarities with scientific theories. It is true that Vedic literature lacks technical details in several aspects, yet these theories project a generalized perspective of the perpetual process of creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe in a cyclic order. Today such cyclic cosmological theories have become a subject of great interest to cosmologists and astrophysicists. Moreover, predictions made by Swamiji on the basis of Vedanta and his own experiences are being confirmed. The conversion of mass to energy, and vice versa, which happens to be a significant contribution of Albert Einstein, had been proposed by Swamiji a few years before its discovery by the scientist.¹⁰

Moreover, the inseparability of space and time in Einstein's special theory of relativity had also been predicted by the great swami before the scientific theory was published. Swamiji said: 'The one peculiar attribute we find in time, space, and causation is that they cannot exist separate from other things.'¹¹

He also refuted the ether theory, which was a scientific dogma during his time. He observed:

As far as it goes, the theory that this ether consists of particles, electric or otherwise, is also very valuable. But on all suppositions, there must be space between two particles of ether, however small; and what fills this inter-etheral space? If particles still finer, we require still more fine ethereal particles to fill up the vacuum between every two of them, and so on. Thus the theory of ether, or material particles in space, though accounting for the phenomena in space, cannot account for space itself (9.288–9).

Surprisingly enough, this ether theory was later abandoned by the modern physicists on the basis of enquiries, and Swamiji's observation was

confirmed. Applying the Vedantic conclusions of the unity of existence Swamiji said that all forces have sprung from one primal force. Today physicists have unified three—electromagnetism, weak, and strong nuclear forces—and are struggling to unify the fourth, gravity, that will bring about the grand unified field theory. Probably the latest experimental confirmation of the Higgs boson may lead to a greater degree of unification. Besides, String theorists have already admitted the unity of the fundamental interactions of particles as well as of matter, upholding the unity of existence. So Swamiji, who preached 'only the Upanishads' is receiving attention from some scientists too.

Vedanta philosophy speaks of Brahman, absolute Consciousness, as the sole cause of the universe. It holds that the universe has come into being by the apparent modification of Brahman, its cosmic power called maya. Maya is the substratum of space, time, and causality; is finite and inscrutable. It animates this ever-changing universe of names and forms. Before the creation the basic elements of nature remain in equilibrium. Vedanta, echoing the principles of Samkhya cosmology, asserts that creation begins with the breakdown of this equilibrium. Swamiji teaches:

At the end of a cycle, everything becomes finer and finer and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and there it remains for a time quiescent, ready to spring forth again. That is Srishti, projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the Pranas? They are resolved back into the primal Prana, and this Prana becomes almost motionless—not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic Sukta: 'It vibrated without vibrations'—Anidavatam. There are many technical phrases in the Upanishads difficult to understand. For instance, take this word Vata; many times it means air and many times motion, and often

people confuse one with the other. We must guard against that. And what becomes of what you call matter? The forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into Akasha, from which they again come out; this Akasha is the primal matter. Whether you translate it as ether or anything else, the idea is that this Akasha is the primal form of matter. This Akasha vibrates under the action of Prana, and when the next Srishti is coming up, as the vibration becomes quicker, the Akasha is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns, moons, and systems. We read again: *Yadidam kincha jagat sarvam prana ejati nihsritam*—‘Everything in this universe has been projected, Prana vibrating.’ You must mark the word Ejati, because it comes from Eja—to vibrate. Nihsritam—projected (3.399–400).

Swamiji was the first Vedantist who tried to bring together Vedanta cosmogony and scientific cosmology. His concepts of *akasha*, universal matter, and *prana*, universal force, impressed the renowned scientists and thinkers of his times. Nikola Tesla was charmed to know these unique concepts and expressed his desire to search for a mathematical demonstration of the same.

Grand Syncretization

As every scientific theory gets verified and consummates in practical application, similarly Acharya Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta finds its universal application in Swamiji’s practical Vedanta. Scientists experimentally verify a theory by incorporating necessary approximations and optimizations, while keeping its fundamental form unaltered in order to facilitate and simplify experimental procedures. Likewise Swamiji optimized and simplified Vedanta by bringing in the latest principles of science, ethics, and other schools of philosophies.

The eternal, changeless Brahman is the only Truth, and this ephemeral universe is


like an illusion. This is the essence of Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta. Several commentators belonging to different schools challenged Acharya Shankara’s stand by furnishing logical objections against it. These arguments against Advaita were quashed by the Acharya himself and by some of the post-Shankara Advaitins as well. It constitutes a fascinating period in the history of Vedanta philosophy. In the nineteenth century Swamiji, upholding Shankara’s philosophy, projected a new paradigm called ‘*nitya-lila*’, which harmonizes Vedanta and science without totally abandoning the conclusions of the bhakti schools of Vedanta.

Science speaks of two orders of reality: the classical Newtonian and the quantum. The former is the appearance of the latter. Vedanta also accepts two aspects of reality: Brahman and the relative universe—the latter is the appearance of the former. This is illustrated by the famous rope-snake example. The link between the two is consciousness, both individual and universal. Individual consciousness is the appearance of universal Consciousness; the Absolute is of the nature of Consciousness, in which the relative world of fragmented and individualized consciousness is sustained. This is also echoed in David Bohm’s theory of implicate and explicate order.¹² The explicate order is the manifest universe of manifoldness, whereas the implicate order, being of the nature of Consciousness, is the unbroken wholeness, which is the source of the explicate order. Bohm says: ‘There is evidence to suggest that our world and everything in it—from snowflakes to maple trees to falling stars and spinning electrons—are only ghostly images, projections from a level of reality literally beyond both space and time’ (1). Advaita Vedanta asserts that all manifestation of manifoldness is apparent and the product of maya. All dualities are observed from the reference

frame of relativity. But when supreme knowledge dawns, the distinction between knower, knowledge, and known vanishes and the one and absolute Reality is experienced.

Vedanta philosophy not only deals with the nature of Reality but also prescribes the means and methods to arrive at the supreme Truth. These methods are called the various yogas. The person who has come face to face with the absolute Reality is called a *brahma-jnani*, knower of Brahman. The methods employed are not speculative but are tested, scientific, and can be practised like any other discipline. In modern times we have before us the tremendous life of Sri Ramakrishna, who experienced the Reality by adopting all the different yogas. This added a new dimension to the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta by breaking the narrow barriers of sectarian interpretations and beliefs.

Sri Ramakrishna's divine life and mystic visions embody and endorse the experience of the Reality as recorded for thousands of years by earlier scriptures and seers. Several times in his life Sri Ramakrishna had the unique experience of the Reality beyond the previously recorded experiences of the rishis. Swami Saradananda writes in *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master* about Sri Ramakrishna's unique experience of *bhavamukha*,¹³ which is the supreme state of human consciousness. Being established in *bhavamukha* Sri Ramakrishna raised the world from the status of *mithya*, unreal, to the status of *lila*, divine play. Both the absolute and the relative aspects of the Reality were endorsed by him. He stood at its junction. The universe, a manifestation of the Absolute, is projected as a 'mart of joy', and Brahman is conceived of as absolute Bliss. Swamiji brought about the great syncretization of Vedanta and science on the basis of this profound experience of his Master. Indeed, this was the beginning of a new age: both Vedanta

and science are blissful pursuits towards the goal, which is Satchidananda, absolute Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. 

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Salient Features of Swami Vivekananda's Literature

Panchugopal Baksi

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA SAID: 'Language is the vehicle of ideas. It is the ideas that are of prime importance, language comes after.'¹ He manifested his skill in expressing both subjective and objective ideas and of course in lucid and live language.

The swami realized that the language of expression should be moulded according to the change of times and needs of the day. He said to his disciple Sharatchandra Chakravarty:

I think, language and thought also, like all other things, become lifeless and monotonous in course of time. Such a state seems to have happened now in this country. On the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, however, a new current has set in, in thought and language. Everything has now to be recast in new moulds. ... Everything requires to be changed a little according to place, time, and civilisation. Henceforth I am thinking of writing essays in Bengali. *Littérateurs* will perhaps rail at them. Never mind—I shall try to cast the Bengali language in a new mould. Nowadays, Bengali writers use too many verbs in their writings; this takes away the force of the language. If one can express the ideas of verbs with adjectives, it adds to the force of the language; henceforth try to write in that style. ... Do you know the meaning of the use of verbs in language? It gives a pause to the thought; hence the use of too many verbs in language is a sign of weakness, like quick breathing, and indicates that there is not much vitality in the language; that is why one cannot lecture well in the Bengali language. He, who has control over his language, does not make frequent breaks in

his thoughts. As your physique has been rendered languid by living on a dietary of boiled rice and *dal*, similar is the case with your language. In food, in modes of life, in thought, and in language, energy has to be infused (7.133–4).

Swamiji himself demonstrated in his writing, control over his language and the force and energy of language convincingly. As a prose writer he was meticulous and fully conversant with the ethos of various societies. As a *littérateur* the swami was outspoken and dauntless, like an active volcano covered with lush greenery waiting to erupt and destroy all sorts of slander and wrongs.

By introducing pause punctuation Ishwar-chandra Vidyasagar systematized undisciplined Bengali language, while Swamiji made Bengali colloquial, live, forceful, and fit for expressing delicate ideas.

Kalidasa is famous for similes. Tennyson's idylls are embellished with fine images and sound effects. Rabindranath Tagore is outstanding in the craft of expressing lofty ideas in graceful language. Swamiji excels in the use of rhetoric and figure of speech. These traits may be categorized and discussed with the help of examples in the following way: 'Everything will be fruitless like pouring oblations on a pile of ashes instead of in the sacred fire' (6.288). 'I wish everyone to be free—free as the air' (6.372). 'But at times I fret and stamp like a leashed hound' (6.305). 'I am getting cool as a cucumber' (6.424). 'We are like cattle driven to the slaughter-house—hastily nibbling a bite of grass on the roadside as

they are driven along under the whip' (6.428-9). 'You will find instead the enveloping smoke of coal, and standing ghostlike in the midst of that smoke, the half-distinct chimneys of the factories!' (7.304). 'That radiant Light, white, beautiful / As bloom of lotus white is beautiful' (4.503). 'This outward presentation is of order gross, / As hair on human brow, Ay! very gross' (4.513). 'Softly and gently the Malaya breeze / Flows in and out like calm, unruffled breath' (4.516). 'Slyness like that of a fox' (5.442). 'Vanished in an instant like a dream' (5.459).

Use of Metaphor

'No wonder that these sects have mushroom lives to live' (6.167). 'May that Lordly Swan of the limpid lake / Of my mind, guard me, prostrate before Him!' (4.503).

Wit • Referring to the influence of the Christian kings, who snatched some Christian districts from the hands of the Muslims, Swamiji remarked: 'The bite of these tiny ants is much worse than even that of the bigger ones' (7.383). 'It is very difficult to set a wheel in motion; but when once set, it goes on with increasing velocity' (4.363). 'Do fine words butter any pars-nips?' (6.403). 'Does man wear clothes or do clothes make the man?' (5.463). 'Fame is not all milk and honey!!' (6.392).

Pun • 'These sandbanks may rightly be considered as the mouth of the Damodar-Rupnarayan' (7.309). Here the words 'Damodar' and 'Rupnarayan' not only imply the two rivers but also mean 'Narayana as Damodara, or Swallowing everything (Damodara-rupa-Narayana)' (ibid.).

Alliteration • In a poetic duel Swamiji wrote to Miss Mary Hale:

For 'twill be soon, another tune
The moon-struck mate will hear
If his will but clash, your words will hash
And smash his life I fear (8.167).

'Take the husking hammer to heaven, and there it will do its husking' (7.478).

Rhyming Compound • Swamiji wrote to his disciple Nivedita: 'What a mass of namby-pamby nonsense we create round ourselves!!' (6.429).

Epigram • 'Love conquers in the long run' (6.284). 'Bullies are always cowards' (6.305). 'In all countries it is the middle classes that do all great works' (6.325). 'No great idea can have a place in the heart unless one steps out of his little corner' (6.331). 'Even a snake loses its venom if it is insisted that it has none' (6.356). 'The masses will always have the *person*, the higher ones the *principle*; we want both' (6.362). 'To have good and no evil is childish nonsense' (6.380). 'The sweets-vendor's shop is Death's door' (5.486). 'Heroes only enjoy the world' (5.448). 'All drift towards the strong' (4.479). 'Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain' (4.390). 'It is better to wear out than rust out' (6.406). 'Who loves all beings without distinction, / He indeed is worshipping best his God' (4.496). 'Life is only a cup of Tantalus' (4.493). 'History repeats itself' (9.286).

Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped,
not free;
For fetters, though of gold,
are not less strong to bind;
But whoso wears a form Must wear the chain'
(4.393).

Proverb • 'Now if the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain' (4.363). 'The jeweller alone can understand the worth of jewels' (4.281). 'As long as I live, so long do I learn' (4.477). 'Take the husking hammer to heaven, and there it will do its husking' (7.478). 'When you get a horse, never you worry about the whip' (6.427). 'Who sows must reap' (4.393).

Idiom • A rich idiomatic flavour has vastly added to the expressiveness of the swami's language: 'Not one original idea crosses anyone's

brains, all fighting over the same old, threadbare rug—that Ramakrishna Paramahansa was such and such—and cock-and-bull stories—stories having neither head nor tail’ (6.263). ‘Well, I am almost at my wit’s end to see the women of this country!’ (6.272). ‘The captain is ... very clever in telling cock and bull stories’ (7.341).

Master of the Craft

There are principles of good writing followed by successful writers. To write clearly and logically one needs to think like that. In good writing to write simply, naturally, in a conversational tone and in one’s own style, and with a human touch is important. Weak, abstract, vague words and jargon, artificial and ornamental expressions as well as circumlocutions should be avoided. Arthur Schopenhauer suggested the use of common words to say uncommon things. Subjects of topical interest or problems worrying people and of which the author has personal experience should be chosen, so that the author would be able to write more convincingly and with greater authority. ‘To be a successful writer; you must write interestingly. ... Presentation is of very great importance in good writing,’ says L A Hill.² It is interesting to note that this recipe has been entertained in the works of Swamiji. His views on linguistics and syntax are almost identical to those of Ernest Gowers, who considered the use of unnecessary words as ‘a symptom of loose thinking.’³

In his lecture ‘The Future of India,’ Swami Vivekananda said: ‘Our life-blood is spirituality.’⁴ And that mysticism was the pivot and pole of his life and thoughts. His utterances and writings are rich in his love for nature, humanism, and sense of humour.

As a bona fide rover Swamiji had an acute and sensitive observation of natural phenomena—in fact, nature provides more than a mere background in his literature. His use of nature reminds

us that of Thomas Hardy in *The Woodlanders* and *The Return of the Native*, with its unforgettable Wessex scene. The Himalayas and its amazing altitude, pervasion, solemnity, and holiness had a special place in Swamiji’s heart. The same may be spoken about his attraction for the Ganga.

In his ‘Memoirs of European Travel,’ originally published in the *Udbodhan* magazine under the title ‘Bilat Yatrir Patra’ and afterwards in book-form as *Parivrajak*, the swami sometimes deems to be a romantic poet who emotionally describes the beauty and diversity of nature, caring not for pause short or long, as we can note in probably one of the largest sentences written on nature:

That blue, blue sky, containing in its bosom black clouds, with golden-fringed whitish clouds below them, underneath which clumps of cocoanut and date palms toss their tufted heads like a thousand chowries, and below them again is an assemblage of light, deep, yellowish, slightly dark, and other varieties of green massed together—these being the mango, lichi, blackberry, and jack-fruit trees, with an exuberance of leaves and foliage that entirely hide the trunk, branches, and twigs—while, close by, clusters of bamboos toss in the wind, and at the foot of all lies that grass, before whose soft and glossy surface the carpets of Yarkand, Persia, and Turkistan are almost as nothing—as far as the eyes can reach that green, green grass looking as even as if some one had trimmed and pruned it, and stretching right down to the edge of the river—as far down the banks as where the gentle waves of the Ganga have submerged and are pushing playfully against, the land is framed with green grass, and just below this is the sacred water of the Ganga (7.303–4).

And then his description shifts from the river to the sea: ‘How beautiful! As far as the eyes reaches, the deep blue waters of the sea are rising into foamy waves and dancing rhythmically to the winds’ (7.305).

A few of Swamiji's essays attest to his love for nature: 'The beautiful flowers of the forest with their many-coloured petals, nodding their heads, jumping, leaping, playing with every breeze; the beautiful birds with their gorgeous plumage, their sweet songs echoing through every forest glade—they were there yesterday, my solace, my companions, and today they are gone—where?' (8.148). 'There is the morning sun radiant in his glory, bringing light and warmth and joy to a sleeping world. Slowly he travels and, alas he also disappears, down, down below! But the next he appears again—glorious, beautiful! And there is the lotus—that wonderful flower in the Nile, the Indus, and the Tigris, the birth-places of civilisation—opening in the morning as the solar rays strike its closed petals and with the waning sun shutting up again' (8.148–9).

Also in a few poems Swamiji appears to be a high priest of nature. The following extracts testify to the poet's power of imagination and love of nature:

There light clouds spread,
heaping up spun cotton;
See next a huge snake, then a strong lion;
Again, behold a couple locked in love.
All vanish, at last, in the vapoury sky (6.180).

Swamiji, as a revolutionary, exhibited his fighting spirit and critical acumen in his doings, sayings, and writings as well. An unseasonal violet symbolizes struggle for existence and adherence to a principle and duty:

Change not thy nature, gentle bloom,
Thou violet, sweet and pure,
But ever pour thy sweet perfume
Unasked, unstinted, sure! (8.170).

The following is an example of the poet's almost unearthly skill to visualize various aspects of nature and his flexible, passionate, and simple lyrical style perfectly attuned to his purpose:

Softly and gently the Malaya breeze
Flows in and out like calm, unruffled breath;
The moon's rays pour their
cooling current forth;
The earth's bare body in fair garb is clothed,
Of trees and creepers multitudinous;
And the flower abloom lifts her happy face,
Washed with drops of dew, towards the sun
(4.516).

We add an example to show the swami's use of nature even in his epistles. In a letter written from Darjeeling on 28 April 1897 he said to his 'sister' Miss Mary Hale: 'This Darjeeling is a beautiful spot with a view of the glorious Kanchenjanga (28,146 ft) now and then when the clouds permit it, and from a near hilltop one can catch a glimpse of Gauri Shankar (29,000 ft?) now and then. Then, the people here too are so picturesque, the Tibetans and Nepalese and, above all, the beautiful Lepcha women' (6.391).



It is quite natural that the writings of a great philosopher like Swamiji reveals his human and social consciousness, his deep sympathy for the toiling class, and his burning patriotism: 'That India, the India of "natives", is the chief means and resources of their wealth and civilisation, is a fact which they [Europeans] refuse to admit, or even understand. We too, on our part, must not cease to bring it home to them' (7.358).

Ye labouring classes of India, as a result of your silent, constant labours Babylon, Persia, Alexandria, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Baghdad, Samarqand, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, Holland, and England have successively attained supremacy and eminence! And you?—Well, who cares to think of you! ... The world-conquering heroes of spirituality, war, and poetry are in the eyes of all, and they have received the homage of mankind. But where nobody looks, no one gives a word of encouragement, where everybody hates—that living amid such circumstances and displaying boundless patience, infinite love, and dauntless practicality, our proletariat are doing their duty in their homes day and night, without the slightest murmur—well, is there no heroism in this? (7.358–9).

Swamiji, as a true humanist, does not hesitate to raise his voice against misanthropy and popular conventional faith in religious rituals ignoring human beings:

These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God (4.496).

Swamiji appears as a messiah of the ailing humanity. He always thought about the problems and sufferings of the riff-raff of society and their salvation. His epistles too manifest his realistic and liberal outlook. In a letter written from Almora on 10 July 1897 to his brother disciple Swami Brahmananda, the swami said: 'Please

write to Shashi to open a work department like this for the service of the poor. ... Curtail the expenses of worship to a rupee or two per mensem. The children of the Lord are dying of starvation. ... Worship with water and Tulasi leaves alone, and let the allowance for His Bhoga (food offerings) be spent in offering food to the Living God who dwells in the persons of the poor—then will His grace descend on everything' (6.404).

In another epistle, written from Murree on 10 October 1897, Swamiji expressed the following to Swami Akhandananda, another of his brother disciple:

We should say, '*Sa pratyaksha eva sarvesham premarupah*—He is ever manifest as Love in all beings.' What other God—the creation of your mind—are you then going to worship! Let the Vedas, the Koran, the Puranas, and all scriptural lumber rest now for some time—let there be worship of the visible God of Love and Compassion in the country. All idea of separation is bondage, that of non-differentiation is Mukti. Let not the words of people dead-drunk with worldliness terrify you. '*Abhirabhih*—Be fearless'. 'Ignore the ordinary critics as worms!' Admit boys of all religions—Hindu, Moham-medan, Christian, or anything; but begin rather gently—I mean, see that they get their food and drink a little separately, and teach them only the universal side of religion (6.410–1).

'Be mad over this, and strike others with this madness! This life has no other end. Preach His name, let His teachings penetrate the world to the very bone' (6.411).

The naughty child Naren became a serious-minded Master, badly-busy organizer when he grew older; still could not completely avoid a childlike inclination. A reader may find in the works of the swami the names and quotes of literature from India and abroad, references to scriptures, stories, and all that sometimes seasoned with good humour. We may call up his

remarks to Frankincense—Mr Francis H Leggett—on 6 July 1896: 'It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He—the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world!' (6.367). This spirit of fun and banter adds a special flavour to his literature.

In a poetic duel with Mary Hale, Swamiji replied:

Tho' many a lay her muse can bray,
And play piano too,
Her heart so cool, chills as a rule
The fool who comes to woo.
Though, Sister Mary, I hear they say
The sway your beauty gains,
Be cautious now and do not bow,
However sweet, to chains (8.167).

The Swami wrote to Mary Hale on 28 April 1897 from Darjeeling: 'My hair is turning grey in bundles, and my face is getting wrinkled up all over; that losing of flesh has given me twenty years of age more. And now I am losing flesh rapidly, because I am made to live upon meat and meat alone—no bread, no rice, no potatoes, not even a lump of sugar in my coffee!' (6.391). In such a state of serious illness none but Swamiji could make fun of it and say to her: 'I am going to train a big beard; now it is turning grey. It gives a venerable appearance and saves one from American scandal-mongers! O thou white hair, how much thou canst conceal, all glory unto thee, Hallelujah!' (6.392).

Other remarkable characteristics of the swami's literature are the elegance, facility, and variety of cadence of his poetry; the meticulous care and well documentation of his prose writing; his messages of fearlessness, love, and liberty; his expression of ideas in emotive language; and of course his preaching of Advaita, the last word on religion, with literary flavour.

Virtually all literary genres are found in the works of Swamiji. Certain people may consider some of Sri Ramakrishna's manners and words obscene or slang. Sumit Sarkar writes: 'The remarkable thing about Ramakrishna's nature imagery is the unselfconscious ease with which he passes from similes conventionally beautiful to others that would seldom be mentioned in chaste late-19th-century bhaktalok writing.'⁵

Swamiji, like his guru, did not indulge in mid-Victorian hysterical mania for sanctity. That is why he wrote in his 'Memoirs of European Travel':

Once she [Madame Loyson] expressed her dislike of an actress, saying, 'It is very bad of you to live with Mr. So-and-so without marrying him.' The actress immediately retorted, 'I am a thousand times better than you. I live with a common man; it may be, I have not legally married him; whereas you are a great sinner—you have made such a great monk [Monsieur Loyson] break his religious vows! If you were so desperately in love with the monk, why, you might as well live as his attending maid; but why did you bring ruin on him by marrying him and thus converting him into a householder?'⁶

Perhaps Swamiji is the only *littérateur* who has cultivated literary pursuit in four languages—Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, and English—efficiently.



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Philosophy as Sadhana

Dr Ravindra K S Choudhary

(Continued from the previous issue)

WHAT ABOUT Wittgenstein? His case is of great relevance for our purpose. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) has mostly been regarded as the mentor-philosopher of Logical Positivism and Linguistic Philosophy. The question naturally arises as to whether he had any mystical experience. Was he a sadhaka? It is well-known that many contrasting things meet in Wittgenstein's thought. His *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* opens with the logical and culminates in the mystical. His later work, *Philosophical Investigations*, contains substantial criticism of the earlier one. So extraordinarily eventful was his life!

Wittgenstein and Philosophy

As an Austrian soldier during World War I Wittgenstein fought bravely on the most dangerous fronts. A profound transformation was simultaneously taking place in him. While he was a prisoner of war in Italy, he completed the *Tractatus*. When he returned from the war, he was a changed man and 'the first thing he did was to rid himself of his wealth.'²³ Russell's remark concerning his first meeting with Wittgenstein after the war is noteworthy: 'I had felt in his book a flavor of mysticism, but was astonished when I found that he has become a complete mystic. He reads people like Kierkegaard and Angelus Silesius, and he seriously contemplates becoming a monk. It all started from William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. ... He has penetrated deep into the mystical ways of thought and feeling.'²⁴

Wittgenstein is also reported to have had a spontaneous mystical experience upon hearing a passage in a play. He had a legendary lack of interest in money and mansions. He declared the mere materialistic achievements of the Western civilization were foreign and repellent to him. He had a great appreciation for Rabindranath Tagore's mystical poems and an admiration for Gandhian ideals. Sometimes it seems that Wittgenstein's spiritual home was nowhere but India.

Wittgenstein's whole life can be seen as a communication of the way in which basic philosophy ought to be thought, taught, and applied. He 'saw life as a task,'²⁵ and he had a conception of a very high ethical standard for the 'task' of life. Such was the ideal he believed in, but he often felt a sort of incompetence to fulfil it to his satisfaction. He was conscious of the chasm between the actual course of his life and the demands of its ideal. Yet Wittgenstein's life and thoughts were intertwined more closely than usual. 'Thinking was action to him,'²⁶ says Fania Pascal in a personal memoir.

One cannot understand Wittgenstein unless one gets his message of practising philosophy sincerely and seriously. One must bear in mind the moral presence of Wittgenstein throughout his work. It has rightly been observed that he was more of a guru than a philosopher, and 'to be in Wittgenstein's presence was without doubt to be present at the painful birth of something most profound.'²⁷ Like a true guru he was an exemplar of the contemplative life. He used to tell his students that philosophical problems must arise out

of a genuine need rather than an expression of wit and cleverness. Therefore, he emphasized that 'the distinction between a philosopher and a very clever man is a real one and of great importance.'²⁸ Thus Wittgenstein believed that philosophy can never be a profession. According to him, philosophy is a mission, and an infallible integration of life and thought is essential for this mission.

It is again a mark of modern Western civilization, in Wittgenstein's view, that we have a whole lot of philosophers as professionals who confuse philosophy with teaching and preaching. In Wittgenstein's view philosophizing is after all a great task, a sadhana. He once said: 'I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view' (94). On another occasion he remarked: 'Of one thing I am certain, the religion of the future will have to be extremely ascetic; and by that I don't mean just going without food and drink. I seemed to sense for the first time in my life the idea of an asceticism of the intellect. That this life of reading and discussing in the comfort of Cambridge society, which I so enjoyed, was something I would have to renounce' (129).

Sadhana

But sadhana cannot be initiated without appropriate experience and knowledge of the nature of things. Advaitic sadhana is primarily regarded as the path of knowledge, jnana yoga. The other two forms of sadhana, widely recognized in the Indian tradition, are karma yoga and bhakti yoga. These are not arbitrary divisions but based on certain important principles. As the Advaitic sadhana represents jnana, which ascribes the primacy of reason, qualified aspirants are inclined to follow this form of sadhana. Advaita Vedanta, in this sense, 'is only for the decidedly philosophical type of people who are guided by Reason alone.'²⁹

To make headway on the path of Self-realization, reason needs to be purified and awakened by controlling the lower impulses, instincts, and so on through higher principles. When we come across the expression *mano-nasha*, destruction of the mind, it is intended to imply its complete control by appropriate means. It has thus rightly been observed: 'When a spiritual teacher says "Go beyond mind", he or she is saying, "Go beyond your narrow, socio-culturally conditioned mind".'³⁰

Interestingly, Daya Krishna tried to understand the notion of 'illness'. 'The stranger problem is that there are not only "diseases" of life or what may be called the "body", but also of "mind", "reason", "intellect", and even of the "spirit". Mental illnesses are fairly well known, but not so the diseases which "reason" itself is prone to. As for the "spiritual illnesses" one hardly hears about them.'³¹ This view is of course open to a multiplicity of interpretations, yet one thing is far from any doubt or dispute: the very faculty of reason, upon which we have been relying so heavily in all our intellectual pursuits, is prone to suffer from serious illness. Hence a sadhaka's senses and mind need to be controlled and reason purified in order to progress on the path of Self-realization.

Sadhana has two aspects: the negative, consisting of *vairagya*, desirelessness or renunciation, and the positive, *abhyasa*, repeated practice. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

By discipline or positive practice we confirm in ourselves the truth of things, truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of love, truth of works and replace with these the falsehoods that have overgrown and perverted our nature; by renunciation we seize upon the falsehoods, pluck up their roots and cast them out of our way so that they should no longer hamper by their persistence, their resistance or their recurrence the happy and harmonious growth of our divine living.³²


A sadhaka has first to get rid of all hankering for enjoyment of things, unseen and seen, detrimental to spiritual progress. This negative side of sadhana is basically preparatory and purgative. It represents 'the essential preliminary to all illumination.'³³ This is true not only in Advaitic sadhana but in the sadhana of any other faith as well. The positive side of sadhana consists in the repetition of some idea or thought conducive to spiritual growth. This is contemplation. It is clear that reason has an important role to play in all stages of sadhana. It is said in the Bhagavadgita: 'Indeed, there is nothing in this world so purifying as knowledge.'³⁴ The Gita also speaks of knowledge as sacrifice, jnana yajna, and regards it as superior to all other forms of sacrifices. Both sides of sadhana are complementary: one emphasizes withdrawal from the 'many' and the other teaches concentration on the 'one'.

Further, three activities have been regarded as essential in the positive aspect of Advaita sadhana: *shravana*, hearing the words of the scripture from the guru; *manana*, cogitating on their meaning; and *nididhyasana*, meditation on their meaning for assimilation. *Manana* includes reasoning and discussion. The major hindrance on the path of Self-realization is *ajnana*, ignorance, of our true nature. Liberation from ignorance therefore comes through jnana. 'The intelligent aspirant after Brahman, knowing about this alone, should attain intuitive knowledge.'³⁵ Philosophical knowledge thus acquired from *shravana* and *manana* serves as an aid to *nididhyasana*; in other words, the former culminates in the latter.

Only one who has attained Self-realization can be a true guru. The Self-realized one has been portrayed by Acharya Shankara as: 'Calm and magnanimous, who does good to others as does the spring, and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same'³⁶ Further, as it has been

pointed out: 'Since the guru's principal function is to remove the causes of ignorance and lack of understanding among his students, he must have a superlative degree of intellectual acumen. The Vedānta system and the early Upaniṣads consistently select the discipline of understanding as the primary means of liberation, making the intellectual virtues the foremost ones.'³⁷

'The *sādhana* leading towards self-knowledge,' according to J N Mohanty, 'is characterized by a many-coloured splendour generated by many levels of philosophizing and religiosity.'³⁸ The *Taittiriya Upanishad*, through the story of Bhrigu learning from his father Varuna, vividly portrays the various stages of Self-realization.³⁹ The successive stages in this journey are the physical, vital, mental, rational, and intuitive. A true seeker of knowledge finds truth embedded at each level and sees that these levels can harmoniously give rise to the Advaitic vision. The Gita also says: 'Understanding the Self as thus superior to the intellect, and completely establishing (the Self) in spiritual absorption with the help of the mind, O mighty-armed one, vanquish the enemy in the form of desire, which is difficult to subdue.'⁴⁰

Thus philosophy and sadhana need not be at loggerheads; they can coexist. Sadhana is, after all, concerned about channelizing all our thoughts properly to a higher order. The apparent contraposition between the two seems to be overemphasized in many cases. Their difference lies mostly in the divergent methods and logic adopted by their interpreters. The gap between rational thinking and meditative experience has never been too wide for Advaitins to overcome. It is also true that 'the Vedantic experience comes after a long course of intellectual discipline and appears only as a fruition or the perfection of the intellect, and is not anything opposed to the intellect.'⁴¹ 

(References on page 500)

Women and Rites of Marriage

Rhyddhi Chakraborty

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE and the beliefs that surround this institution must be viewed differently for different cultures. Marriage in industrial societies is very different from that in societies where kinship relations, and the alliances created through those relations, are the most important part of an individual's life.

Types and Forms of Marriages

There are three major categories of belief in the purpose of marriage: (i) It may be viewed as existing primarily for the continuation of the family and society through procreation; (ii) it may be considered as an alliance, that is, the means to bring about the integration of society by setting up kinship ties and kinship terminology; (iii) it may be perceived as a complex system of exchanges between groups or individuals.

Marriage is said to be of two kinds: monogamy, when a man is married to one woman, and polygamy, when a person has more than one spouse. Polygamy has two forms: polygyny, when a man has more than one wife, and polyandry, when a woman has more than one husband. Polyandry was traditional in Tibet. One effect of polyandry is to limit the population, which is important in areas where arable land is a scarce source.

Societies regulate not only how many spouses one can have but from what general categories these individuals should be selected. Exogamy, marriage outside a defined kinship group, is primarily concerned in prohibiting incest.

Brother-sister, parent-child unions are forbidden in nearly every culture. Cousin-marriage is forbidden in the third degree of the collateral line among Roman Catholics, while it is recommended among many people of Africa and some parts of Asia. Endogamy is marriage within a defined group as determined by custom or law. This group may be defined by collaterally recognized kinship ties or by a religious tradition. Pious Roman Catholics and Jews obey the rule of endogamy and take a spouse from within their own religion. Many Hindus marry within their own caste, except when practising hypergamy.

Now, in every form of marriage, a transition occurs in a girl's life when she is married and incorporated into another society or culture. This incorporation signifies that changes are to be made in her life and also that marriage is a kind of rite of passage.

The Latin word *ritus* means primarily the form and manner of any religious observance. In English the word 'rite' ordinarily means the ceremonies, prayers, and functions of any religious body, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, or others.

A rite of passage is a vehicle for moving an individual or a group of individuals from one way of being to another through a series of culturally recognized stages. A marriage ceremony moves the bride and groom from being unmarried to being husband and wife.

The ceremony of marriage may be entirely of a religious nature, or a mixture of religious and secular elements, or entirely secular. Two

elements are normally used to mark a marriage, whether there is a ceremony or not: one is the sharing of food between the bride and groom, and the other a public statement or the presence of witnesses at the marriage event.

Hindu theologians define *samskara* as a rite that consecrates, purifies, and perfects a person. There are twelve *samskaras* that persons of the first three castes have to undergo. These *samskaras* begin prenatally at the time of conception and lead up to *vivaha*, marriage, which is of prime importance.¹⁶

Swami Vivekananda and Indian Women

Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture on 'Women in India' delivered in California in January 1900, said: 'The ideal woman in India is the mother, the mother first, and the mother last. ... In the West, the woman is wife. The idea of womanhood is concentrated there—as the wife. To the ordinary man in India, the whole force of womanhood is concentrated in motherhood. In the Western home, the wife rules. In an Indian home, the mother rules.'¹⁷

Swami Ranganathananda comments on this statement: 'Swami Vivekananda expressed the view that the old Indian civilization had comparatively neglected woman as wife to uphold woman as mother, whereas the modern Western civilization has done just the reverse. To his judgement, both appeared as partial and imperfect experiments, and exhorted both the civilizations to apply the required corrective.'¹⁸

Swami Vivekananda once said that 'In India there are two great evils. Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.'¹⁹ He thus traced the degradation of India through the continued negligence of women and the masses. He constantly taught that the Atman is sexless. According to Swamiji, Manu says that 'where women are respected,

there the gods delight; and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught' (7.215).

'Swami Vivekananda is the first monk in history to uphold and to work for the freedom and equality of women *without any reservation*. While upholding the Indian ideal of motherhood before the modern woman, he wanted it to be the fulfilment of the modern ideal of wifehood and not its negation. This is to be achieved by woman remaining as woman and realizing the perfection inherent within her through her functions in the home and society.'²⁰

On giving his thoughts on marriage, Swamiji says that the concept of marriage differs in old and new India:

On one side, new India is saying, 'We should have full freedom in the selection of husband and wife; because the marriage, in which are involved the happiness and misery of all our future life, we must have the right to determine according to our own free will.' On the other, old India is dictating, 'Marriage is not for sense-enjoyment, but to perpetuate the race. This is the Indian conception of marriage. By the producing of children, you are contributing to, and are responsible for, the future good or evil of the society. Hence society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry and whom you shall not. That form of marriage obtains in society which is conducive most to its well-being; do you give up your desire of individual pleasure for the good of the many.'²¹

Swamiji does not advise us to follow any one of the extreme views but to take up a fresh, modified view that keeps pace with our changing society and maintains the underlying basic principle of independence. Each person and circumstances may not be the same, so to arrive at a correct decision in each case, women should apply their own understanding, built up through proper education, both secular and spiritual.

Embodiments of the Divine Mother

The task of women is twofold: as individuals they have the destiny, obligatory upon every human being, to acquire moral perfection, and as members of the human race women are called, in union with men, to represent and develop humanity. Both tasks are indissolubly united and cannot be accomplished without the other. The freedom of women consists in the possibility of fulfilling these two tasks, with its rights and privileges, both in public and private lives.

Nature created male and female forms. It is, therefore, not permissible to take one gender as perfect and as the standard for the other. In her famous book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,²² Mary Wollstonecraft criticizes the view that women should learn only how to keep the house and be attractive. Being admired for one's beauty and vocational skills, she said, is demeaning to a human being. Human beings, both male and female, have the ability to shape their emotions and morals through reason. All human beings deserve an education that cultivates their reason. People would then be able to respect one another as self-controlled, independent, moral, and rational beings. Mutual respect of this sort between husbands and wives is the only route to a happy marriage. In her second work,²³ she argued that mutual respect of this sort between social classes is the route to a just society.

John Stuart Mill (1806–73), in his *The Subjection of Women*,²⁴ suggested that centuries-old customs and laws subordinated women to men, but the test of true virtue is the ability of a man and a woman to live together as equals. One reason why they often do not is that the law favours men. We can note that particularly in the Indian law system, which returns women to the custody of the very husbands who have physically abused them. Another reason is that husband and wife do not usually live together as equals, since women

are taught to be submissive and make themselves attractive, while men are not taught to behave similarly towards them. Such an imbalance in the way men and women relate to each other in India, and in many other societies, is doomed. This relic of the past is discordant with the future and must necessarily disappear. Throughout his life, Mill believed that equality and justice in the relationship between men and women would improve and make both of them happier.

In most patriarchal cultures of the world women play a decidedly secondary role. This is especially so with regard to religious rituals. But today many cultures and religions are undergoing massive changes. Women are taking up additional roles of being breadwinners and having careers, while retaining their old roles as wives and mothers. Many institutions in modern India are trying to give women a status of freedom through education and wider economic opportunities, not through competition or conflict with men but through cooperation. The manifestation of the innate Divinity of women and men has to be the goal of the institution of marriage.

'Durga', by
Rana Dhar
(2004)



Since the dawn of human civilization women have formed an inseparable part of society and culture. In Indian philosophical thought the eternal relationship between Purusha and Prakriti remains the source of creativity and sustenance of the universe. These two realities have remained a subject of attention for writers, philosophers, lawgivers, and social thinkers. Almost all ancient societies have demarcated the world of men and the world of women. But in India the wife is called *sahacharini*, co-traveller, or *sahadharmini*, co-religious. Indians also looked at both male and female as Ardhanarishwara, dual form of Shiva-Shakti.

The role a husband and a wife play in their family is essentially spiritual, as is perfectly explained by Sri Ramakrishna: 'Women are, all of them, the veritable images of Shakti. In the northwest India the bride holds a knife in her hand at the time of marriage; in Bengal, a net-cutter. The meaning is that the bridegroom, with the help of the bride, who is the embodiment of the Divine Power, will sever the bondage of illusion.'²⁵



Notes and References

16. The samskaras are *garbhadhana*, *pumsavana*, *simantonnayana*, *jata-karman*, *nama-karman*, *nishkramana*, *anna-prashana*, *chuda-karman*, *upanayana*, *keshanta*, *samavartana*, and *vivaha*—the actual number may differ according to the region and the social structure.
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- (Continued from page 496)
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 32. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, 311.
 33. *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, 57.
 34. *Bhagavadgita*, 4.38.
 35. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.4.21.
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 37. W Cenkner, *A Tradition of Teachers: Śaṅkara and the Jagadgurus Today* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995), 41.
 38. J N Mohanty, 'Advaita Vedanta as Philosophy and as Religion', *Explorations in Philosophy: Essays by J N Mohanty*, ed. Bina Gupta, 2 vols (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2001), 1.112.
 39. See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3.1–6.
 40. *Bhagavadgita*, 3.43.
 41. *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, 146.

Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda; translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

IF ONE'S MOTHER IS alive in the world, one can childishly demand from her food, drink, and other similar things. One should not give any mental pain to one's mother; one should show great devotion to her. See Shankaracharya, Chaitanya Deva, our Master, Swamiji—all of them showed great reverence to their mothers. One who does not show any devotion to one's mother will suffer.

Ideal Life

There are some mothers who want to keep their children bound to the world. If a son wants to renounce everything for God, then by weeping and crying she tells him to get married and become a householder. She is herself suffering; yet she wants to make him suffer as well. These are dishonest mothers. The Master used to say: 'There will be no harm if one does not listen to their words.' And those who are the 'real' mothers, if the son wants to give up everything for God, then becoming very happy and pointing out all of the defects of worldly life, they bless the son and say: 'It is my great fortune that you are willing to call upon God!' This is verily a genuine mother. Nowadays there are very few such mothers; they are rarely found.

The only duty of a person is to call upon God with a one-pointed mind. It is not good to have many children; it increases suffering in the family and keeps everyone preoccupied. In this world there are various types of bereavement, anguish, and disease; such things are unavoidable. For

that reason it is beneficial to develop an attitude of indifference, of not caring for anything. Somehow let the day pass; there is nothing to gain by becoming restless. But it is very difficult to develop an indifferent attitude. That becomes possible by continuous spiritual practice. As much as one's mind flows towards God, that much will it grow indifferent to the world. While living in this world it is not an ordinary thing to become detached. One who can do that is verily an ideal person. King Janaka was perfectly detached even while being a householder.

Violence is a sin. Nonviolence is verily freedom. Whether you lie on a comfortable bed, eat delicious food, dress nicely, whatever you do, if your mind is free of violence, you are surely free. Buddha renounced such violence and asked everyone to give it up as well. You people did not obey his teachings, that is why you are suffering. All those who have become great—the avatars and great souls—all of them gave up violence; moreover, they advised others to relinquish it. I tell you emphatically: those who follow their advice will surely be benefited.

Sri Krishna advised Uddhava: 'Oh Uddhava! Go now and perform austerities. Then you will understand my glory—that which I am! If I explain it to you now, you will not understand. First perform austerities.' This is a great teaching for humanity: without performing austerities, one cannot understand God. He himself proclaimed this. Even he performed austerities to teach humankind.

What will you gain by simply saying, ‘Master! Master! Swamiji! Swamiji!’ What will happen by simply reading the Master’s and Swamiji’s teachings? How will you develop faith, trust, and devotion if you do not practise what the Master and Swamiji asked you to do? You will lie, cheat others, and do so many unjust things; yet, on the other hand, you will show people what a great devotee you have become saying, ‘Master! Master!’ By deception one can gain respect, fame, and wealth, but one cannot become spiritual by such means. If you want to be spiritual, you must associate with the holy and follow exactly what the sadhu says. Only then will spirituality blossom.

Disciples of the same guru later build different monasteries. They, in turn, make their own disciples. When they die, their disciples start fighting with each other saying: ‘I am the disciple of so and so. How am I any less?’ They build monasteries for doing good, but in the end such conflicts are created, for everyone is attached to one’s own monastery—this is the law of maya. Monasteries are built to give people the opportunity for holy company. Moreover, those who are novices on the spiritual path can get some notion of spirituality from their gurus. But once the spiritual ideas become firmly established, there is no need of a monastery. Prior to that, it is very much essential. Forgetting all those truths, for the most part, they focus on their own enjoyment and become sluggish. Moreover, as they are not performing spiritual practices, anger, hatred, and jealousy creep in. Having no work, they do not realize these tendencies arising from within. Even if they are aware of it, they are powerless to drive them out. By what means will they drive them out? Where is their austerity? For this reason, many sadhus do not start a monastery. They know that it is not creating a monastery, but creating a place for quarrels!

‘I am doctor,’ ‘I am so and so,’ ‘I am rich’; as much as one keeps such an attitude, that much

the ego puffs up. But by cultivating the attitude that there are many who are greater than I and that everything I have achieved was by God’s grace alone, the ego goes away. It cannot come near. For one whose ego is completely effaced, much work is possible. But a little trace of ego remains for doing good to the world. It cannot cause any harm. The Master used to say: ‘When, by the touch of a philosopher’s stone, an iron sword becomes golden, it can injure no more.’ Though its form remains the same, its power to kill is gone. Exactly in this way the ego remains but it can do no harm. In short, it is enough if there is no ego or pride in the core of one’s heart. One should always remember: ‘I am the machine; he [God] is the machinist.’ To make this idea firm, one must frequently seek holy company.

What will happen by merely trumpeting loud words? Deception will get one nowhere with God. One should call upon him only in a simple way. He will be pleased and will reveal himself. A person can be tricked with such big talks. You can have abundant name and fame, receive great respect from people, but God knows every one of your innermost thoughts. He knows your value. You cannot deceive him. God judges a person’s heart. Lacking insight, a person judges the exterior. This is the difference. Whoever wants to see God face to face must pay no attention to name and fame, seek no credit for ostentatious talks, call upon him guilelessly, and do sadhana in solitude. Performing sadhana in solitude is essential; only then can one realize one’s chosen ideal. When one realizes one’s chosen ideal, one should start preaching at his command. He himself bestows the power to preach. Pray. Call upon God. You will receive his command.

Everyone wants to command, no one wants to obey an order. Look, first learn to obey commands; only then will you gain the power to command. Swamiji used to say: ‘Try to learn

how to be a servant first, only then will you be able to become a master.’

Surely everyone can make the Master their ideal. He is an ideal householder, ideal monk, ideal guru, ideal disciple; he is the ideal of all faiths and paths. He is the ideal of the Shaktas; he practised all the spiritual disciplines described in the Tantra scriptures and attained perfection in each. He is the ideal of the Vaishnavas; such a depth of devotion for Sri Hari is rarely seen. He had the vision of Sri Hari. He is the ideal of Shaivas because he had the direct vision of Shiva. He is the ideal of Sri Rama’s devotees because he had the vision of Sri Rama and Sita. He is the ideal of Vedanta sadhakas because within three days he attained *nirvikalpa* samadhi, which is the ultimate goal of Vedanta sadhana. Again, he is the ideal of Christians and Muslims because he received the vision of Jesus Christ and Mohammed. He is everyone’s ideal because he practised all of the paths and attained perfection in each. Having learned of and experiencing all paths, he used to say: ‘As many faiths, so many paths; all are true.’ He did not merely utter these words as you do. He is a universal guru. Such a person is rarely seen. Whoever follows the Master as his ideal will be saved from the suffering of this world. Yes, I say this with conviction!

‘Sha...’ has attained everything. If one keeps his company, all good will come to him. How much austerity he practised! Sadhus eat neem leaves to conquer lust, anger, greed, and hunger. That is why ‘Sha...’ also ate neem leaves. You have intended to feed ‘Sha...’, that is very good. I see so many people are being benefitted by him. It is very important that he stays healthy. But do you know I am extremely worried lest he fall sick?

Tell me, where shall you find such a place of pilgrimage as Jagannath? There are no caste distinctions and everything is unified there. Is it an ordinary matter? And you can feed as many

people as you like by purchasing prasada. If you pay money, they will deliver it to your home. Nowhere else is there such an advantageous arrangement. Again, see what a grand temple. It is beautiful to behold and stands on the seashore! It is a place for sadhus and great souls. There is Gauranga [Chaitanya Deva] on one side; how many hundreds of Vaishnava devotees spend their entire lives there. It is a place of immense purity. I prayed to Jagannath that I will not be able to roam around too much and that I may digest whatever I eat. Jagannath kindly granted that. At Calcutta, after collecting money from Upen Mukherjee, the founder of Basumat Press, I used to buy puris and potato curry to eat. By God’s grace it was easily digested with no trouble. I used to eat at the homes of householders. I had to go according to their preferred time or else they would become irritated. That is why I gave up eating at their homes.

Now, here I am sitting on the bank of the Ganga. My mind has settled very well. I don’t feel like going anywhere. But against my wish, for eating, I had to go to various householders’ homes. That is why I stopped eating at their houses. Then, after taking money in that manner, I would buy food and eat it. That was a great freedom; whenever I wished, I would buy food and eat. No need to listen to anybody’s comments. But now my health has deteriorated and I can’t tolerate much. After that, when I used to live on fried bread, one day ‘Sha...’ babu especially asked me to come and stay at his home. I also went to the house of Ramakrishna babu. Then I told ‘Sha...’ babu: ‘But I have no fixed time for eating.’ At that he said: ‘Maharaj, our family is so big and so much expense is being incurred. A half pound of cooked rice and wheat bread will be thrown away. Someone will keep your food at noon and at night. Whenever you wish, you may eat.’ Now I can see that he has acted as a true brother.

(To be continued)

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



An Ominous Mission against Kali & Her Child

Ananda

Swarup Kumar Roy, Art Union,
165, Sri Aurobindo Sarani, Kolkata
700 006. 2012. xii + 231 pp. ₹ 360.

Among the desires for the plethora of mundane pleasures open to humankind, the craving for sexual delight is probably the most potent, intense, and overpowering emotion. But Vedanta's conclusive finding is that even the highest worldly joy is trash compared to the supreme Bliss of the Atman. Adverting to the supernal bliss of Brahman the *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: '*Raso vai sah*; He [Brahman] is verily bliss.'

In the galaxy of knowers of Brahman Sri Ramakrishna shines most luminously. Sri Ramakrishna, whose joy was in the Atman, *atma-rama*, delighted in the intimate experience of his chosen deity Mother Kali, the anthropomorphic symbol of Brahman. Thus both Kali and her child Sri Ramakrishna were embodiments of the plenary bliss of Brahman. Now, if the origin of such a sublime, extraordinary, and unique spiritual mood of mystic ecstasy is unabashedly traced to the human libido—the raw emotion of sexual craving—and if the Goddess Kali and Sri Ramakrishna are caricatured as pathetic victims of eroticism, masquerading as divine and spiritual icons, can any genuine devotee of Sri Ramakrishna keep quiet?

This work is a scathing criticism by Ananda, a revered monk of the Ramakrishna Order, of *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* authored by Jeffrey J Kripal. Stung to the quick by Kripal's shocking sacrilege in besmirching the saintly image of the universally adored Sri Ramakrishna by profane remarks and half-baked scholarship, Ananda launches a reasoned and

relentless diatribe against Kripal and demolishes his vicious arguments and vile contentions. Fiery sparks of fulminations fly thick and fast from each word of the book. Ananda's righteous indignation at Kripal's heresy bubbles through each and every page of this book.

Ananda shows the inadequacies of Freudian psychoanalysis, which forms the basis of Kripal's skewed evaluation of Sri Ramakrishna. Divine love and the frenzy of lust are poles apart—the former promotes dispassion and renunciation, while the latter strengthens attachment and possessiveness. The sexual impulse is primarily animalistic and body-centred; the stronger it grows in one, the deeper it buries one in the ordure of body-consciousness and delinks one from spiritual consciousness. When such is the case, how can sexual joy, a quintessentially crude and elemental emotion of the psycho-physical complex, be the genesis of spiritual ecstasy of the type experienced by Sri Ramakrishna?

The gist of the book, which abounds in scholarly quotes, incisive remarks, sarcastic comments, and dazzling dialectics, is best given by Swami Shivamayananda in his 'Foreword': 'Attempt is made by this [Freudian] school of psychologists to find a sexual origin for the so-called higher experiences of saints and mystics. According to Freudians, when a person fails to obtain satisfaction for his instinctive craving in the real world outside, owing to social taboos, keenness of competition, and the rest, his desires take a subterranean course. They remain submerged in the unconscious levels of the mind, and with added force derived from their suppression by mental censorship, they seek satisfaction in the world of phantasy, accompanied by various abnormal and unhealthy mental symptoms' (iv).

Somebody has to be there to tell Kripal that Freudian psychology is passé and discredited. What we have today is cognitive psychology

based on neurological models of the brain, which is more scientific and has a universal appeal.

The Freudian emphasis on the onset of puberty and the experience of spiritual conversion is too simple a generalization, as it ignores all data that is inconvenient to it. No doubt society enforces various forms of sex taboos under the influence of religious sanctions, but this can be accounted by the fact that religion and morality have always gone hand in hand. Sexual continence demanded of a sadhaka and the repression of which psychologists speak are poles apart in their methods and results. In repression there is degeneration of the mind, and in a spiritual experience a higher development of the mind! As far as the method is concerned, repression is accomplished through fear, unnatural application of force, dissimulation, and evasion of the problem. In sadhakas undertaking sadhana sex is fearlessly and intelligently faced and analysed.

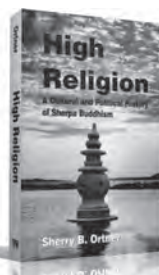
As regards the use of sex symbols in mysticism, it is common knowledge that sex is a powerful emotion, and the language employed for its expression offers a suitable medium to mystics for conveying a mere glimpse of the transcendental experience that enraptures the soul. As the ultimate in spiritual experience is *tanmayata*, the meditator merging in the object of meditation, a handy illustration is the union of two persons in love, though it must be kept in mind that a spiritual union is meant and not a mundane physical union.

The merits of the book are: (i) a forceful exposition of the basic theme by marshalling copious quotes, extracts, and references culled from various authoritative treatises; (ii) an acute sense of earnestness informing each and every word of the book; and (iii) the amazing scale and range of collateral subjects covered.

On the flip side, there are numerous spelling mistakes and syntactical errors. A discerning reader cannot help feeling that a better organization and more lucid presentation of the subjects dealt with would have vastly enhanced the value of the book. The author, however, deserves praise for vehemently and convincingly refuting the thesis that the ecstasy of God-intoxication experienced by mystics is, at best, only a clandestine expression of the raw emotion of eroticism, a

mischievous thesis grounded in Freudian theories and psychoanalysis.

N Hariharan
Madurai



High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism

Sherry B Ortner

Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 41
U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar,
Delhi 110 007. Website: www.mlbld.com. 2012. xxi + 245 pp. ₹ 245.

The Sherpas, the rugged mountain people who inhabit the region surrounding Mount Everest, is the subject of research by an anthropologist. The book traces the social, cultural, and political history of Sherpas as well as their religion, Tibetan Buddhism. It covers the period from 1480—when the Sherpas left Kham, a region of Tibet, and settled in Nepal—to about 1952. The work also shows the emerging novel ideas in Sherpa society. Sherpa language itself is rarely written, but Ortner went to great lengths in locating the original Sherpa histories, written by educated Sherpa lamas, to make her study thorough.

The ten chapters encompass Sherpa migration, settlement, subsistence, family structure, economic and political organization, as well as folklore, beliefs, and religious ideologies. The author also relates stories of the beginning, expansion, and flourishing of Buddhist monasteries and nunneries in the region.

The 'Introduction' explains in details the project undertaken and the research methodologies adopted. The book has notes, a glossary of all non-English words, references, and an index. Each chapter contains a simple time chart showing the period and the main dates covered in the chapter. This important theoretical contribution has a wealth of delightful information. The book will appeal not only to anthropologists but also to historians and people interested in Nepal, Tibet, Sherpas, and Buddhism.

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REPORTS

Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

On 24 June 2013 Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, unveiled a marble bust of Swami Vivekananda at Presidency University—formerly Presidency College, where Swamiji studied—in Kolkata in the presence of the vice chancellor of the university and other dignitaries.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Baghbazar:** Seminars on 10 February and 25 March, in which 500 people participated. **Chengalpattu:** Processions, devotional music, and film shows on Swamiji at Pukkathurai, Poraiyur, Mettugramam, Perumberkandigai, Arungunam, Pazhamathur, and Kothimangalam on 25 May and 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 and 16 June respectively. **Colombo** (Sri Lanka): On the initiative of the centre a postage stamp on Swamiji was released by Sri Mahinda Rajapaksa, president of Sri Lanka, on 7 June at the prime minister's house, Colombo, in the presence of a number of dignitaries. **Dhaka** (Bangladesh): On the initiative of the centre a programme comprising discourses and musical performance was held at Jagannath University, Dhaka, on 15 June to commemorate Swamiji's visit to the university in 1901; around 1,000 students, teachers, and guests participated in the programme. **Gretz** (France): A programme comprising special worship, discourse, and interreligious music on 1 June in Paris. **Kochi:** Cultural



Marble bust of Swami Vivekananda at Presidency University, Kolkata

competitions on 8 January, in which 178 students participated. Youth camps at Muvattupuzha, Kochi Math, Thrikkakara (Kochi), Vazhapatty (Kothamangalam), and Vengoor (Angamali) on 15 December 2012 and 12 January, 7, 24 February, and 5 May 2013 respectively, in which 885 youths participated. Seminar at Kurupampady on 18 January, attended by 50 teachers. Ratha Yatra throughout Ernakulam district, held in collaboration with the Government of Kerala from 24 to 25 January. Procession and discourses organized at 22 places during the yatra were attended by 250 people on an average at each place. **Mauritius:** Cultural competitions on 2 June, in which about 550 students from 35 schools and colleges participated. **Narainpur:** Three-day national-level youth convention from 13 to 15 June, attended by 4,500 people, including 4,100 delegates from 20 states. **Ramharipur:** Started 50 Vivekananda Study Circles for youths in Bankura district. **Ranchi Morabadi:** District-level youth camp at Rajappa village of Ramgarh district in Jharkhand, in which 263 youths participated. **Salem:** Discourses on Swamiji on 27 and 28 April and 24–26 May at the ashrama premises. **Saradapitha** and **Vivekananda University:** Jointly organized a state-level youth convention from 19 to 22 June, in which 629 residential youth delegates from 18 districts of West Bengal—including 37 tribal delegates from remote tribal areas—participated. **Srinagar:** Talks

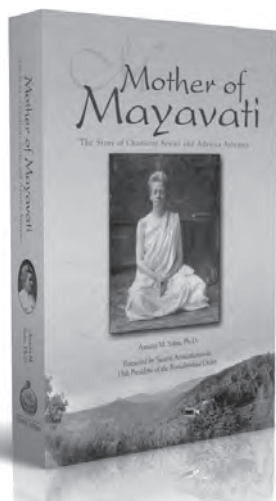
and devotional music on 15 and 16 June, attended by 125 people. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** 5 lectures at different places in and around Kolkata between 21 May and 20 June, attended by 2,850 people. A special lecture on 28 May and a devotional music programme on 7 June at the centre, attended by 825 people.

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru, celebrated the diamond jubilee of its Balaka Sangha from 17 to 19 May. About 2,500 devotees and 30 monastics who had been members of the Balaka Sangha attended the three-day programme.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Guwahati, conducted a free medical camp during Ambuvachi Mela near Kamakhya Temple from 22 to 25 June, in which 4,080 patients were treated.

On 29 June Sri-mat Swami Atmas-thanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, released at Belur Math the book *Mother of Mayavati: The Story of Charlotte Sevier and Advaita Ashrama* brought out by **Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.**



Achievements

S Aluksha, a student of the Matriculation Higher Secondary School at Ramakrishna Mission, Chengalpattu, won the National Award in the 58th Ball Badminton Championship. He was given a cash award of 6,000 rupees by the chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

Five class-11 and three class-12 students of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama,**

Narendrapur, secured the prestigious Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) Scholarship for the year 2012— KVPY is an ongoing National Program of Fellowships in Basic Sciences, initiated and funded by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, to attract exceptionally and highly motivated students for pursuing basic science courses and careers in research.

The University Grants Commission has granted extension of autonomous status to the Vivekananda College of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai, for a period of six years starting from 2012–13.

Relief

Distress Relief • **Narottam Nagar** centre distributed 260 medicated mosquito nets among the needy people of nearby villages.


Drought Relief • In the wake of severe drought in certain parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, some centres supplied drinking water to affected families. **Shivanahalli:** 3,092,000 l to 11,780 people in 9 villages of Malur Taluk in Kolar district from 27 May to 26 June. **Aurangabad:** 3,805,800 l to 12,000 people in 12 villages of Aurangabad district from 26 May to 27 June. **Pune:** 1,500,000 l to 30,000 people in 15 villages of Ahmednagar district from 29 May to 24 June.

Fire Relief • **Sargachhi** centre continued its fire relief work in Hukohara and Jhaldia villages in Murshidabad district by distributing 25 kg chira, 10 kg gur, 13 lungis, 12 dhotis, 100 pens, and 1,300 notebooks among the distressed people.

Flood Relief • In the wake of the unprecedented devastation caused by cloudburst and flash floods in a major portion of Uttarakhand, **Kankhal** centre has started a relief camp at Agastyamuni in Rudraprayag district. Food packets (each packet containing a loaf of bread, rusk, puri, pickle, sweets, and other items), baby food, and water bottles were distributed among 5,000 affected people at Agastyamuni, and 8,000 buns, 12,000 cakes, 4,000 packets of rusk, 4,800 packets of biscuits, 1,100 kg flour, 16,060 kg broken wheat

grains, 3,100 kg chira, 1,515 kg milk powder, 1,050 kg sugar, 11,090 kg gur, 5,000 kg salt, 4,000 candles, 12,000 matchboxes, and other items were distributed among nearly 600 families at 20 inaccessible villages between Rudraprayag and Gupta Kashi till 29 June. Besides, 460 flood-affected patients were treated in the medical

camp established at Ganganagar, about 7 km from Agastyamuni. Relief work is continuing in full swing. Steps are being taken to start a relief camp at Joshi Math by the **Dehradun** centre.

Summer Relief • Salem centre distributed buttermilk to nearly 12,000 people in the month of May. 

UTTARAKHAND FLOOD RELIEF WORK

In the wake of the unprecedented devastation caused by cloudburst and flash floods in a major portion of Uttarakhand, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, has undertaken relief work in the affected areas through its Kankhal (Haridwar) centre. The relief work will be further expanded depending upon the then pressing situation.

While thanking all who contributed for this noble cause, we request others to come forward and donate liberally, to help us in this noble endeavour. All donations paid in cash or by cheque / demand draft drawn in favour of "RAMAKRISHNA MISSION" payable at Kolkata are exempt from income tax under section 80-G of the I.T. Act. Online donation facility is also available through our website (http://www.belurmth.org/donation_cca/donation.php). Donations may please be sent to: **The General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, (Relief Section) Belur Math, Howrah, West Bengal – 711 202, India.**

One may also deposit his/her benevolent contribution at our nearest branch centre.

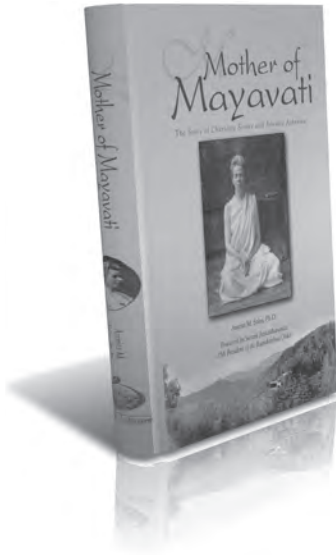
26 June 2013

Swami Suvirananda
Assistant Secretary
Belur Math, Howrah



Mother of Mayavati

—Amrita M. Salm



Pages xxiv + 400 | Price ₹ 200
Packing & Postage: ₹ 50

It was Swami Vivekananda's dream to start a centre on the Himalayan heights. He wanted this centre to be dedicated to Advaita philosophy alone. In his vision, it was to be a centre where the East and the West would meet to give full and free expression to the Highest Truth of Non-dualism, without any of the weakening ingredients of the philosophy of the dualistic schools. His dream was actualized by a couple from England, Mr. and Mrs. Seviers, especially by the latter. After the founding of Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, soon Mr. Sevier passed away. Then it was Mrs. Sevier who, through her gritty determination and lofty character, built and consolidated the centre. In course of her amazing life there, she eventually emerged to become the 'Mother of Mayavati'.

Mother of Mayavati is the inspiring story of Mrs. Sevier's life—a life exemplifying complete dedication to the spiritual ideal, purity, and selfless love for all. And with her life-story is entwined the early stages of the history of Advaita Ashrama. The book contains also her letters and brilliant articles, and even important documents related to her and the centre. Forty-nine colourful pictures have also been included, further embellishing the beauty and worth of the book.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra— Hindi Audio DVD

—Swami Brahmeshananda

The common aim of Indian philosophies is to attain liberation. Yoga is a means of liberation. Patanjali Yoga Sutra is the seminal text on Yoga. Swami Brahmeshananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a former editor of the English journal Vedanta Kesari, lucidly explains the sutra in detail.

This DVD is an attempt to bring out the practical aspects of the Yoga philosophy for the benefit of the listeners.



60 Hours | Price ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 55



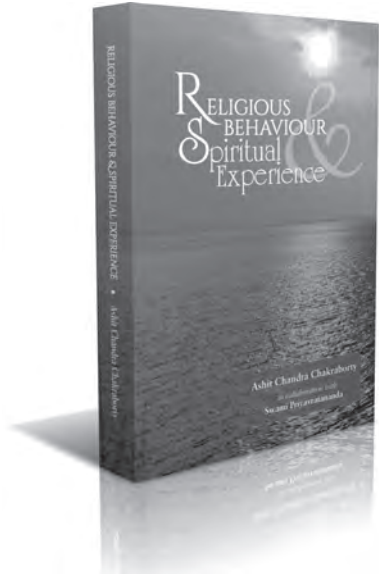
Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22890898 / 22840210 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org

Religious Behaviour & Spiritual Experience

—Asit Chandra Chakraborty
in collaboration with
Swami Priyavratana



The religious have always intrigued the lay. Spiritual life and experience eludes ordinary understanding or so it seems. Senses fail to fathom spiritual truths. Science seems to be at loggerheads with spirituality. Is there any meeting ground? Can spiritual truths be investigated by a scientific mind using scientific techniques? Why do people take to spiritual life? Is there any scientific truth behind supra-normal experiences? These and other questions have been explored in this book.

Pages 340 | Price ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 35

Vivekananda in Pictures

Photographs remind us of personalities. Prophets have a striking personality which is reflected to some extent in their images. We are fortunate that we have many photographs of Swami Vivekananda, through which we can get a glimpse of his magnetic bearing. All his original photographs are in black and white. We have digitally re-mastered some of these photographs into colour. We are happy to present them in this book and are sure that they will be received well by his admirers. This book is being published on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.



Pages 40 | Price ₹ 40 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 35



Please write to:

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Phones: 91-33-22890898 / 22840210 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org

A PLACE FOR PRAYER

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol, a unique soothing place in the industrial city of Asansol, commenced its journey in 1926. A boy's school was started in 1939, with the hostel facility from 1953. To cope with the expansion of the Ashrama activities and increasing number of students the Ashrama along with the School, was permanently shifted to its present 55 acre campus from its previous cramped location, in the year 2001. It runs at present a Secondary School (which is now one of the best in the entire state), a Vocational Training Centre (VTC), a Free Coaching Centre for underprivileged children with the supply of their educational needs, nutrition and medicines, a Charitable Dispensary (Allopathy & Homoeopathy), and a Public Library-cum-Reading Room. Under its influence, more than 25 centres (not affiliated with the Ramakrishna Mission) are engaged in various humanitarian services.

We are badly in need of a commodious Auditorium to hold our intended Cultural or Religious programmes, Seminars, and Conventions in a befitting way. A spacious Universal Prayer-cum-Meditation Hall is also required to meet the demand of the growing number of devotees and to provide a suitable serene ambience for Meditation and Pacification of Mind for the people of all faiths.

To make that vision true, in 2008, we started building one Universal Prayer-cum-Meditation Hall and Auditorium with an estimated cost of ₹ 5 Crore. The Auditorium will have 1100 seats and the Universal Prayer-cum-Meditation Hall would accommodate about 800 devotees.

The superstructure of the colossal two-storeyed building completed with an expenditure of about ₹ 3.11 Crore. For the finishing of this building ₹ 3.92 Crore is required. The cost escalates everyday and so we are anxious to complete the project at the earliest.

We fervently appeal to all of you, the generous admirers and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, and well-wishing organizations, institutions, and individuals, to extend your helping hands to materialize this noble endeavour. Your valued contributions will help us to serve the society in a better way.

Cheque/ Demand Drafts may be drawn in favour of '*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Asansol*' and should be sent to the below mentioned address. Your offering is exempted from Income Tax under



u/s 80G of Income-tax Act, 1961. You can donate online through RTGS/NEFT to our A/c No: 813787811, with Indian Bank, RKM Branch, Asansol, IFSC Code: IDIB000R083 (Please mention your postal address and PAN No through e-mail to us while donating online).

Swami Sukhananda
Secretary



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA

(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission, PO Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, West Bengal 712 202)

Vivekananda Sarani, Asansol, Dt. Burdwan, West Bengal-713 305.

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